

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME II. (1914**)

ADDITIONAL TO THOSE ISSUED WITH VOL. III.

(Kindly pointed out by various correspondents.)

Page 305, footnote 2. For " Map 27 " read " Map 26 ".

Page 425, last line. For " 1/Bedfordshire " read " 2/Bedfordshire ".

Page 536, Index. Add " Rum, 433 ".

Page 540, Index. Delete entry as to 7th Hussars, as the text p. 423 refers to the French 7th Hussars.

Page 546, Index. Add under " Highlanders, Cameron " " 426 ".

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME III. (1915*)

(Kindly pointed out by various correspondents.)

Page 8, footnotes, line 10 from bottom. For what is said about the "Egg" grenade substitute: 'The "Egg" grenade, after trial, was introduced in place of the "Ball" grenade on 1st March 1916, and was first noticed by the British at Ovillers about the middle of July 1916.'

Page 12. Add after line 2 :

"On the 22nd January 1915 an Army Order was issued which directed that dismounted officers of Royal Engineers and infantry should no longer be armed with a sword on active service in the field, and should be equipped with the same accoutrements as the rank and file, except as regards the bayonet frog, entrenching implement and carriers. Actually the wearing of the sword by dismounted officers had been abandoned, as in the S. African War, very soon after the first actions."

Page 13, lines 4-5. For "but it was some time before the Intelligence Branch could state with any certainty" substitute :
"but by the 17th December, in a memorandum to the War Office, the Intelligence Branch could state with certainty".

Page 18, lines 12-14. For the sentence: "In other respects . . . scale was made." substitute: "No arrangement was made nor were orders issued for a combined artillery preparation."

Page 31, line 11. After "13th and 15th Brigades" add: ", and the artillery of the 27th and 28th Divisions was strengthened at different times by the loan of five batteries from the 3rd, 4th and 5th Divisions".

Page 44, line 1. After "the problem," add footnote: "This solution had been evolved by the Munitions Committee of the Leeds Engineering Employers assembled by Sir Algernon Firth, Bt. as President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce. Leeds was the first of the new districts to be organized on the basis of a national factory for the production of munitions."

Page 83, footnote 3, line 2. For "Sir Roger Bacon" read "R. H. S. Bacon".

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME III. 3

Page 87, Note II., lines 9-10. For "The two divisions were weaker than the British Intelligence could know at the time ;" substitute :

"The two divisions were each short of an infantry regiment, as the British Intelligence suspected at the time, although what had become of the six battalions withdrawn was not known ;"

Page 95, line 6. For "some two hundred yards in rear." read : "fifty to sixty yards in rear in brigade support."

Page 143, footnote 1, line 3. For "Ypres sector" substitute : "Ypres front (it came from rest billets at Tourcoing, where it had only just arrived)".

Page 158. Delete footnote 4.

Page 177, footnote 2, line 6. For "1st Bridging Train" read "2nd Bridging Train".

Page 184, line 2. After "Cavalry Corps" add footnote :

"A 9th Cavalry Brigade had been formed on the 14th April of the 15th and 19th Hussars. These regiments had provided the divisional squadrons of the first six divisions, and were replaced in this duty by a squadron each from the Northumberland Hussars, South Irish Horse, and North Irish Horse, and 3 squadrons of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry. The remaining two squadrons of the Northumberland Hussars formed the divisional squadrons of the 7th and 8th Divisions. The third regiment of the 9th Cavalry Brigade, the Bedfordshire Yeomanry, joined on the 11th June 1915."

Page 196, footnote 1. Add : "It was commanded by a Frenchman."

Page 220, line 10 (end of first paragraph). Add footnote :

"The orders apparently did not reach the battalions of the 150th Brigade until nearly noon, for the 5/Durham L.I. crossed the canal about that time followed later by the 4/East Yorkshire and 4/Green Howards."

Page 264, line 5 from bottom of text. For "5/Green Howards and 5/East Yorkshire" read "4/Green Howards and 4/East Yorkshire."

Page 265, line 11 from bottom. For "Ingelminster" read "Ingelmunster."

Page 275, line 10. After "150th Brigade" add footnote :

"The 4/Green Howards and 4/East Yorkshire relieved the 5/D.L.I. and 5/Green Howards and remained attached to the 11th Brigade."

Page 288, line 22. For "resultats" read "résultats."

Page 345, line 11. After "Yorkshire" add " , a company of the 5/Durham L.I."

Page 370 *et seq.* To Order of Battle add the names of the commanders of divisional artillery :

"3rd Division, Br.-General H. G. Sandilands ; 4th Division,

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOLUME III. 4

Br.-General R. F. Fox ; 5th Division, Br.-General J. G. Geddes ; 27th Division, Br.-General A. Stokes ; 28th Division, Br.-General A. W. Gay ; 50th Division, Br.-General C. G. Henshaw ; 1st Canadian Division, Br.-General H. E. Burstall ; Lahore Division, Br.-General F. E. Johnson."

Page 414, Index. Add, under " Flying Corps, Royal . . . photography,"
" 85."



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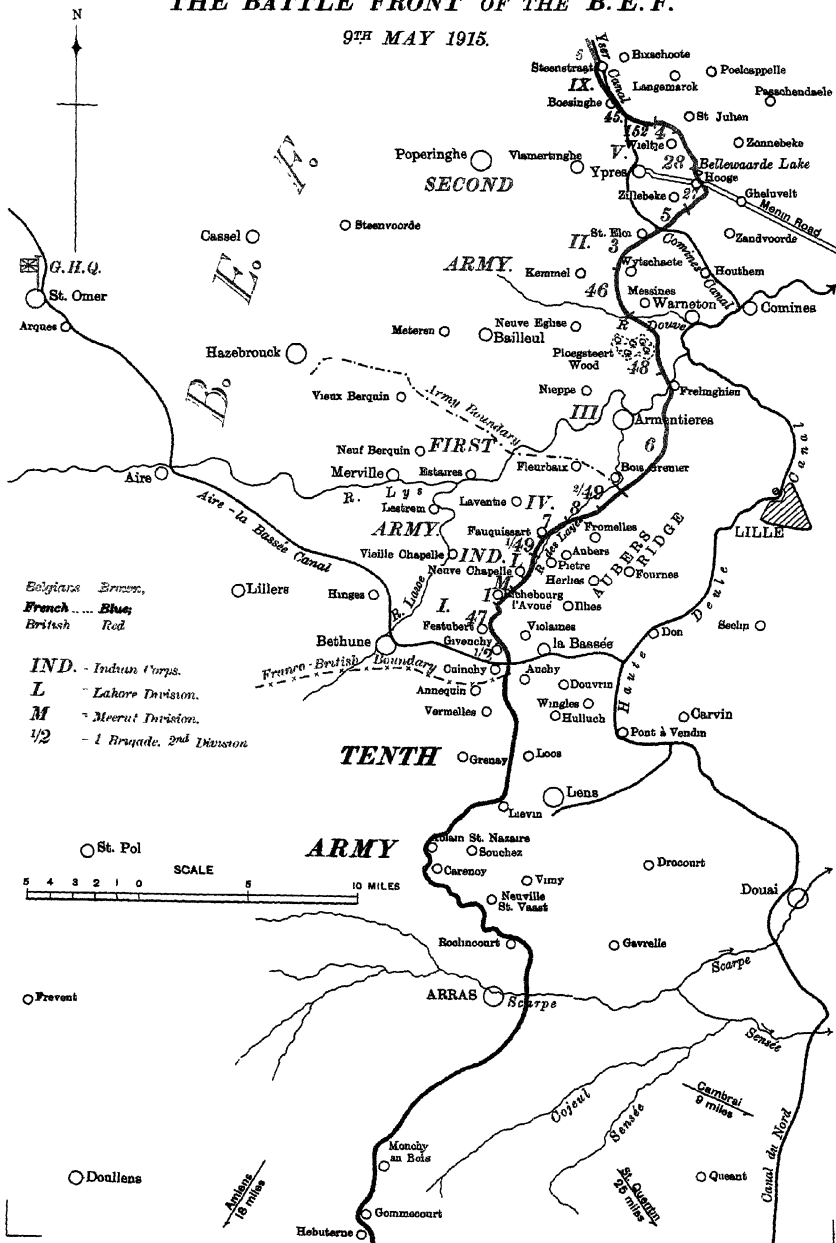
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SKETCH B.

SKETCH B.

THE BATTLE FRONT OF THE B.E.F.

9TH MAY 1915.



HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

BASED ON OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

BY DIRECTION OF THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE
COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

MILITARY OPERATIONS

FRANCE AND BELGIUM, 1915

BATTLES OF AUBERS RIDGE, FESTUBERT, AND LOOS

COMPILED BY

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SIR JAMES E. EDMONDS

C.B., C.M.G., R.E. (Retired), p.s.c.

MAPS AND SKETCHES COMPILED BY

MAJOR A. F. BECKE

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PREFACE

THIS volume, the fourth of the series, concludes the narrative of the war year 1915 on the Western Front, begun in the previous one. Its special interest is that it describes the first employment of Territorial and New Army divisions as complete formations in a great offensive, and the first British employment of gas. It contains the accounts of the Battles of Aubers Ridge and Festubert ; the expansion of the British Expeditionary Force, including the formation of the Third Army ; the minor actions during the summer ; the development of the Allied plans ; the Battle of Loos ; and the retirement of Field-Marshal Sir John French from the command of the British Expeditionary Force.

The year was one of disappointment. But the disappointment over the lack of decisive success on the Western Front, where, in view of trench systems extending along the whole line of battle, little had been expected in England, was undoubtedly overshadowed by the failure of the Dardanelles expedition, of which there had been such high hopes. The story of 1915 is but a commentary on the straits to which the British Empire was reduced by lack of preparedness for war, and the consequent heavy cost in life and material without result. All that was written in the preface to the third volume might be repeated here. The gist of it can be summed up by quoting one of its paragraphs : " Its very misfortunes and mistakes make " 1915 particularly worthy of study. In the remembrance " of the final victory, we are apt to forget the painful and " weary stages by which it was reached, and the heavy " cost in our best lives during these stages."

The fighting described in the battles of Aubers-Festubert and Loos was undertaken at the wish of the French Commander-in-Chief, in co-operation with attacks of the French Armies, and, although the British forces were not ready, was demanded by the general situation. The Old Army

was no more, and the New Armies were not yet ready to take its place, having neither sufficient training nor adequate armament. Both Sir John French and Sir Douglas Haig, who commanded the First Army which was to make the attack, protested against engaging battle at Loos in September, but, for political reasons, were overruled.

Warfare has been one long struggle between means of offence and means of defence, epitomized by the struggle of guns versus fortifications. Throughout 1915, owing to lack of heavy artillery and of high-explosive and gas ammunition, both French and British were at a disadvantage, and unable to overcome the enemy, who was fighting behind entrenchments defended by machine guns and covered by strong wire entanglements. Each successive Allied offensive unfortunately taught the enemy a new lesson, and enabled him to improve his organization of the *Abwehrschlacht*, and to be in a better position to meet the next assault when the Allies had corrected their earlier mistakes. Thus for a long time the Germans kept a step ahead of the French and British.

To divulge our new methods whilst attacking with insufficient means was to squander possibilities of surprise, just as much as the first effect of gas was wasted by the Germans at "Second Ypres," and the first effect of tanks was thrown away at the Somme in September 1916. Not only did the improvised British Armies in 1915 lack the large extra amount of artillery that the war demanded, but they had not even the full complement of guns supposed to be required under ordinary conditions of warfare, although it is a well known axiom that young troops require more artillery support than seasoned battalions. Even counting the obsolete weapons sent to France—the old 6-inch howitzer and the 4·7-inch gun of the South African War—the number of heavy guns per mile of frontage of attack was barely half what the French had, and yet General Joffre attributed the ill-success of his Armies largely to lack of sufficient artillery preparation. The actual artillery situation in each battle has therefore been investigated in some detail.

The desire of Sir John French to wait until he could deliver a really heavy blow was theoretically right: to attack and fail, besides revealing our new methods, was to give the enemy soldiers encouragement and greatly strengthen German propaganda. But the Germans appeared to be crushing Russia; the French, with an enemy in their

country, could not wait, and the British, a whole year after declaration of war, could not well let them go on alone. Under these very unfavourable conditions, Territorial and New Army divisions were called on to participate in a great offensive, only to demonstrate once more the lessons of 1861-5 in the United States and 1870-1 in France—that courage, good-will and fine physical condition, though nearly sufficient to make soldiers, will not make Armies. General Joffre complained that the young French troops, owing to lack of trained officers, could only go straight on and could not manœuvre in battle. The new British divisions could not even keep straight on: even the non-military reader will notice how often the British troops engaged lost direction and failed to keep communication with those on their flanks, and how heavy were their casualties in consequence.

If soldiers can be improvised in a year or so, regimental and Staff officers cannot. There is a technique in command, as Marshal Foch has said, that must be learnt; and he might have added that, in the battle atmosphere of death and danger, this technique is not easy to apply.

Other things being equal, success after the original deployment has been accomplished is largely a matter of sound doctrine and good leading, particularly leading by battalion and company leaders, and in the final stages by non-commissioned officers and brave individuals in the ranks. In 1915, a year after the outbreak of war, among the hastily collected staffs and improvised officers and N.C.O.'s, the standard of military knowledge, though in the circumstances extraordinarily high, was not high enough to command success. It was absurd to think that it could be. War is not a thing that can be quickly grasped by any person of intelligence or waged by any one of spirit dressed in military uniform and armed.

Two paragraphs extracted from reports compiled immediately after the battle of Loos reveal, perhaps better than anything that can be written now, the troubles of the Army in 1915. The first is:—

“The expansion of the Army makes it increasingly difficult to provide experienced and well trained staffs, and it can no longer be assumed that measures which would as a matter of course have been taken in our Regular divisions in the earlier stages of the war, will now always be carried out efficiently.”

The second is :—

“ The number of trained officers is gradually diminishing, and officers of the class by which their places are being taken require more definite instruction than periods in the style of Field Service Regulations provide for them.”¹

Of the many mistakes made in the war, most of them part of the price of unreadiness, Lord Kitchener's use of the remaining Regular troops after the departure of the original B.E.F. to form first the 7th and 8th and later the 27th, 28th and 29th Divisions, instead of employing their officers and other ranks to train and leaven the New Army, was probably the most expensive. The difficulties of organizing new divisions were further increased by the failure to take advantage of the experience and the machinery of the Territorial Associations in expanding the military forces, and by employing high class Territorial battalions, full of potential officers, as fighting units.

Sir John French too, in view of the critical situation in France, repeatedly refused in 1914 to part with a single officer or man to assist in training troops at home.² These short sighted views not only led to terrible delays but prevented the proper training of the new units. The British new divisions were really not ready for the field until the 1st July 1916 and even then were very uneven.

The purpose of military history is to discover what actually happened, in order that there may be material for study, and that lessons for future guidance may be deduced. Many legends have arisen as to the causes of the failure at the battle of Loos of certain new divisions, which had only been a few weeks in France, and after perfunctory training in England had no period of initiation at the front. Their movements and the special difficulties with which

¹ The little “Staff Manual”, issued in 1912, full of great principles, was not of much use, for it contained only 1½ pages on “Staff Duties in Brigades”, and no section on Staff duties in corps or divisions—the words “corps”, “army corps”, or “Army”, do not appear.

Major-General W. T. Bridges, mortally wounded in command of the 1st Australian Division at Gallipoli, said at a General Staff Conference at the Staff College, Camberley, a few years before the war : “The periods of the Field Service Regulations are as much use to the Australian Forces as the cuneiform inscriptions on a Babylonian brick.”

² The Germans, on the other hand, using a cadre of 25 per cent. of old soldiers, managed in 8 months to put into the field 12 new “Reserve” divisions, 8 of which were at “First Ypres” and made such a magnificent fight there ; and they had raised 8 more by the 20th January 1915.

they had to contend have been carefully investigated, no less than 700 surviving officers having been consulted.

The awful slaughter and pitifully small results of the battles of 1915 were the inevitable consequences of using inexperienced and partly trained officers and men to do the work of soldiers, and do it with wholly insufficient material and technical equipment. The British nation had failed to keep up an adequate force, and had neglected to make reasonable preparations for war, in particular to provide for rapid expansion. That we were not more severely punished must be attributed, under Providence, to the blindness of our enemies, who, engaged in Russia, Serbia and Rumania, gave us time to prepare the Armies and munitions of 1916, 1917 and 1918.

The narrative is based on the British official records, but even to a greater extent than in previous volumes, I have been assisted by the loan of private diaries and regimental narratives and papers, and by the additions and corrections furnished by officers who have kindly read the chapters in typescript or in proof. To these friends, particularly to those who sent me valuable documents and maps, kept by them as souvenirs, I again offer my sincere thanks, and the apology that considerations of space have prevented me from including the whole of the material that they so generously provided. As all concerned may not have seen the draft or proofs, I ask, as I did in previous volumes, that any further information available, or any corrections thought necessary, should be sent to the Secretary of the Historical Section, Committee of Imperial Defence, 2 Whitehall Gardens, London, S.W.1.¹

Among the friends who lent me their diaries was Field-Marshal Earl Haig.² He also read the typescript and I have placed in footnotes some of the marginal remarks which he made. He further wrote some general remarks on the chapters. On the two chapters on the Battle of Aubers Ridge, he said :—

“I think that you have brought out very well the “terrible conditions under which the First Army had to “carry out the C.-in-C’s orders ‘to support the French at

¹ A list of Addenda and Corrigenda to Volume III. and a few further emendations to Volume II. are issued with the present volume. I tender my best thanks to the readers who kindly furnished them.

² He and the compiler of this volume were in the same year at the Staff College, Camberley, Colonel (afterwards Lieut.-General Sir Henry) Hildyard being the Commandant.

“ ‘all costs.’ The ammunition was very bad : fuzes inefficient, and a great shortage of all kinds of shell. So the means for a real bombardment were lacking.”

On the Festubert chapters he wrote :—“ A very true account of the situation of the B.E.F. in the summer of 1915. You show very well what tremendous efforts and what sacrifices all ranks made to support fully and loyally our French Ally. And I hope that the British people will realize what ‘unpreparedness for war’ cost the Empire in flesh and blood, in the years with which you are dealing.”

He only finished reading the Loos chapters on the 7th January, three weeks before his death, when he wrote to me : “ I think your account is wonderfully correct ”.

In a conversation the Field-Marshal had with me in December 1927, he said that he considered the narrative was somewhat hard on the staff responsible for road control at the battle of Loos, and he was inclined to think that *once the battle had begun*, the problem of getting the 21st and 24th Divisions up without a hitch was nearly impossible of solution : since the divisions were so far back from the battlefield and the troops very tired from previous night marches ; were without practice in feeding themselves under war conditions ; and were bound to meet streams of vehicles, wounded and prisoners, all forced on to the same roads leading from the front.

For the French operations the British records are fairly complete ; but during the course of compilation of the volume the French Service Historique of the *État-Major de l'Armée* published Tome iii. of the official account, “ *Les Armées Françaises dans la Grande Guerre* ”, with four large volumes of appendices, covering the operations in 1915 from the 1st May onwards. Thus it is possible to give in some detail the story of the French share in the fighting which went on simultaneously with the British battles.

The German official account has not reached the 1915 period, but, as in previous volumes General Freiherr Mertz von Quirheim, the Director of the *Reichsarchiv*, Berlin, has been kind enough to furnish information in advance, and this, combined with what is to be found in German regimental histories, has enabled an outline of the German operations to be given sufficient for the comprehension of the battles as a whole.

The operations of the Royal Flying Corps have been briefly mentioned. They will be found more fully described in the official "The War in the Air," Vol. II., by Mr. H. A. Jones, M.C., recently published, the chapters of which he kindly allowed me to see in typescript.

I must again remind readers that the historian is forced to depict a battle with an orderliness which was not apparent during the actual events; it is quite impossible to give an adequate representation of the organized confusion of modern warfare.

The maps, as in previous volumes, have been divided into "Sketches" bound in the volume, which it is hoped will be sufficient for the ordinary reader, and "Maps" for the use of students, issued in a separate case. Compiled independently by Major Becke, comparison with them formed a most useful check on the text.

Attention is called to the "List of Place Names and 'their Location'", which it is hoped will save readers wasting time in searching the sketches and maps.

Allusion is made from time to time in the text to the Dardanelles and other campaigns in progress in 1915, but to link them together and afford means of a rapid survey of the war as a whole a "Calendar of Principal Events" has been provided.

As in the case of the volumes previously issued, I have received very great assistance in the compilation from the staff of the Historical Section (Military Branch):—from Mr. E. A. Dixon and Mr. A. W. Tarsey in the collection of material, and from Captain W. Miles in revision and preparation for the press. I have again had the benefit of invaluable criticism from Mr. C. T. Atkinson of Exeter College, formerly in charge of the Branch, and of my brother-in-law, Mr. W. B. Wood, M.A.

J. E. E.

NOTES

THE location of troops and places is given from right to left of the front of the Allied Forces, unless otherwise stated. In translations from the German they are left as in the original, but otherwise enemy troops also are enumerated in relation to the British front. Where roads running through both the British and German lines are described by the names of towns or villages the place in British hands is mentioned first, thus: "Vermelles—Hulluch road".

To save space and bring the nomenclature in line with "Division", "Infantry Brigade" has in the text been abbreviated to "Brigade", as distinguished from Cavalry Brigade and Artillery Brigade.

The convention observed in the British Expeditionary Force is followed as regards the distinguishing numbers of Armies, Corps, Divisions, etc., of the British and Allied Armies, *e.g.* they are written in full for Armies, but in Roman figures for Corps, and in Arabic for smaller formations and units, except Artillery Brigades, which are Roman; thus: Fourth Army, IV. Corps, 4th Cavalry Division, 4th Division, 4th Cavalry Brigade, 4th Brigade, IV. Brigade R.F.A.

German formations and units, to distinguish them clearly from the Allies, are printed in italic characters, thus: *First Army, I. Corps, 1st Division.*

The usual Army abbreviations of regimental names have been used in the narrative: for example, "2/R. West Kent" or "West Kent" for 2nd Battalion The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment; K.O.Y.L.I. for the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry; K.R.R.C. for the King's Royal Rifle Corps. To avoid constant repetition, the "Royal" in regimental titles is sometimes omitted: for instance, the Royal Warwickshire are occasionally called "the Warwickshire".

In this volume it becomes necessary to distinguish between First-line and Second-line Territorial Force units, thus : " 1/8th London ", " 2/5th Lancashire Fusiliers ", " 2/3rd London Field Company R.E. "

Abbreviations employed occasionally are :—

B.E.F. for British Expeditionary Force ;

G.H.Q. for British General Headquarters ;

G.Q.G. for French Grand Quartier Général (usually spoken " Grand Q.G. ") ;

O.H.L. for German *Oberste Heeresleitung* (German Supreme Command). *N.B.*—" G.H.Q. " in German means Grosses Haupt-Quartier, that is the Kaiser's Headquarters, political, military and naval, as distinguished from O.H.L.

Officers are described by the rank which they held at the period under consideration.

The German practice, rarely followed in English, of writing surnames, when no rank or title is prefixed, has been adopted, *e.g.* " Falkenhayn " and not " von Falkenhayn ".

Time in German narratives and orders, which in the period dealt with was one hour earlier than British, has been corrected to our standard, unless it has specifically stated against it, " German time ".

MAPS AND SKETCHES

THE layered end-paper, Sketch A, has been provided to show in a general way the configuration of the battlefield of Loos, whilst the other end-paper, Sketch C, shows the various stages of the Battle of Loos. It will be sufficient for the ordinary reader to refer to Sketch A for the form of the ground at Loos; but for military students a layered map of French Flanders and Artois is included in the map volume, and should be studied for the configuration of the ground in the Battles of Aubers Ridge, Festubert and Loos. It can be laid on the table with the appropriate situation maps on top of it.

Sketch B has been given to assist readers in connecting this volume with the one dealing with the earlier fighting in 1915. This sketch gives the British front at the opening of the Battle of Aubers Ridge.

A general sketch of the Eastern front is also included in this volume.

The situation maps and sketches, if not otherwise described, give the position of the troops at the close of the day for the date they bear. In some cases, therefore, for the first movements it will be necessary to use the map or sketch marked with the date of the previous day.

Endeavour has been made to insert on the maps or sketches all the places mentioned in the text; but to avoid overcrowding and thus unduly obscuring the movements of the troops, some small localities are omitted, and adequate description is then given in the text as well as in the List of Place Names, so as to enable the reader to fix their position with reference to a marked and well-known place.

The correct spelling of place names has not been so troublesome in this volume, as only French names are involved. For these names, except in the case of Map 1 (which is an extract from maps prepared during the war),

the spelling used on the French 1 : 80,000 maps has been accepted as authentic. (In the French Official History the French 1 : 80,000 and 1 : 200,000 are taken as the authorities for the spelling of French names).

As in previous volumes, the accents in place names have been omitted, with the exception of the accent on a final or penultimate *e*.

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LIST OF PLACE-NAMES WITH THEIR LOCATION*

A

- Ablain St. Nazaire**, $5\frac{3}{4}$ m. WSW. of Lens.
Adramyti, Gulf of, on the coast of Asia Minor, 150 m. south-west of Constantinople.
Ailly, on the Meuse, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. SE. by S. of St. Mihiel (*q.v.*).
Aire, $12\frac{3}{4}$ m. north-west of Bethune.
Aix la Chapelle (Aachen), 37 m. east of Brussels.
Albert, on the Ancre, 20 m. S. by W. of Arras.
Allennes, 7 m. east of la Bassée.
Allouagne, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. west of Bethune.
Angres, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. WSW. of Lens.
Annay, 3 m. north-east of Lens.
Annequin, 4 m. ESE. of Bethune.
Annequin Fosse, just west of Annequin (*q.v.*).
Annezin, 1 m. west of Bethune.
Argonne, district west of Verdun, between Meuse and Aisne.
Armentieres, on the Lys, 11 m. south of Ypres.
Arques, 2 m. south-east of St. Omer.
Artois, the old French province, of which Arras was the chief town ; it almost corresponds with the modern departments of Pas de Calais and Somme.

* The lesser known localities are described with reference to well-known ones. In the present list the centres Amiens, Armentieres, Arras, Bethune, Lens, Lille, St. Omer, Verdun, and Ypres, and, for battle purposes, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, la Bassée, and Loos are mainly used. Distances are measured from the centre of these towns and villages. Trench names are omitted, but the location is given of keeps, redoubts, and strong points.

NOTE.—In choosing the index word, disregard the article the, and l', le, la, les ; e.g. la Bassée is indexed under Bassée, and The Orchard is under Orchard.

- Asiago**, a village and plateau at the foot of the Dolomites, 45 m. ENE. of Lake Garda.
Ath, 30 m. SW. by W. of Brussels.
Aubers, 2 m. ENE. of Neuve Chapelle.
Aubers Ridge, the 6 m. stretch of the ridge that runs behind (eastward of) Aubers (*q.v.*) and Fromelles (*q.v.*).
Auchy lez la Bassée, $1\frac{5}{8}$ m. SW. by S. of la Bassée.
Audenaarde (Oudenaarde in Flemish), on the Schelde, 32 m. west of Brussels.
Avion, $1\frac{3}{8}$ m. south of Lens.

B

- Bac St. Maur**, on the Lys, 4 m. WSW. of Armentieres.
Bailleul, 10 m. SSW. of Ypres.
Bailleul Sire Berthoult, 5 m. north-east of Arras.
Barlin, 5 m. S. by W. of Bethune.
Barrenkopf, in the Vosges, 5 m. NNE. of Metzeral (*q.v.*).
Bas Pommereau, $1\frac{5}{8}$ m. E. by N. of Neuve Chapelle.
Bassée, la, 7 m. east of Bethune.
Bassée Canal, la, from the Deule Canal near Bauvin (*q.v.*), via la Bassée to Bethune and Aire (*q.v.*).
Bauvin, 4 m. ESE. of la Bassée.
Beau Puits, 1 m. N. by W. of la Bassée.
Beaurains, 2 m. SSE. of Arras.
Belfort, French fortress at the southern extremity of the eastern frontier, 225 m. ESE. of Paris.
Bellewaarde Farm, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNW. of Hooze (*q.v.*).
Bellewaarde Lake, $2\frac{3}{4}$ m. east of Ypres.
Bellewaarde Ridge, $2\frac{3}{4}$ m. east of Ypres.
Berclau, $3\frac{1}{4}$ m. E. by S. of la Bassée.
Berry au Bac, on the Aisne, 12 m. NW. by N. of Reims.
Beuvry, 2 m. ESE. of Bethune.
Bialystok, 90 m. NE. by E. of Warsaw.
Billy Montigny, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by S. of Lens.
Blaireville Wood, 5 m. SSW. of Arras.
Blankenberghe, on Belgian coast, 10 m. NE. by E. of Ostend.
Boesinghe, on the Canal, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNW. of Ypres.
Bois 2, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNE. of Souchez (*q.v.*).
Bois Carré, in No Man's Land, $\frac{1}{4}$ m. south of the Vermelles—Hulluch road (Sketch A).

- Bois de Dix-Huit**, behind the German second line, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. east of Loos.
- Bois de Givenchy**, $3\frac{3}{4}$ m. SW. by W. of Lens.
- Bois de la Folie**, 1 m. west of Vimy (*q.v.*).
- Bois des Dames**, 4 m. WSW. of Bethune (Sketch 17).
- Bois des Dames**, behind the German second line, $1\frac{1}{8}$ m. SE. by E. of Hulluch (Map 9).
- Bois du Biez**, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-east of Neuve Chapelle.
- Bois en Hache**, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. NNE. of Souchez (*q.v.*).
- Bois Grenier**, village, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of Armentieres.
- Bois Hugo**, on the eastern side of the Lens—la Bassée road, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. ENE. of Loos.
- Brebis, les**, 5 m. WNW. of Lens.
- Brest Litovsk**, former Russian fortress on the Bug, 100 m. E. by S. of Warsaw.
- Brickstacks, The**, $\frac{1}{4}$ m. east of Cuinchy (*q.v.*).
- Bridoux, le**, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of Armentieres.
- Briques, les**, $\frac{3}{8}$ m. WSW. of Auchy (*q.v.*).
- Bruay**, 5 m. SW. by W. of Bethune.
- Bruges**, 80 m. NNE. of Ypres.
- Brusa**, in Asia Minor, 55 m. south of Constantinople.
- Bukovina**, province, formerly in Austria-Hungary, on the borders of Rumania, 240 m. north of Bucharest.
- Bully**, 5 m. W. by N. of Lens.
- Bully Stream (Courant de Bully)**, flows northward just west of Vermelles (*q.v.*).
- Busnes**, $6\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-west of Bethune.

C

- Calonne**, on the Lys, $6\frac{1}{2}$ m. N. by W. of Bethune.
- Cambrai**, 45 m. ENE. of Amiens.
- Cambrin**, 3 m. WSW. of la Bassée.
- Canadian Orchard**, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. ENE. of Festubert.
- Canteleux**, $1\frac{1}{8}$ m. west of la Bassée.
- Caporetto**, 42 m. N. by W. of Trieste.
- Carency**, $6\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNW. of Arras.
- Carvin**, 7 m. NE. by E. of Lens.
- Cassel**, 18 m. W. by S. of Ypres.
- Cateau, le**, 40 m. E. by N. of Albert (*q.v.*).
- Cercamps**, near Frevent, $20\frac{1}{2}$ m. west of Arras.

Chalet Wood, on the eastern side of the Lens—la Bassée road, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by N. of Loos.

Chalk Pit and Chalk Pit Copse, on the western side of Loos Crassier, $\frac{3}{8}$ m. SSE. of Loos.

Chalk Pit and Chalk Pit Wood, on the western side of the Lens—la Bassée road, 1 m. NE. by E. of Loos.

Chantilly, 23 m. N. by E. of Paris.

Chapelle Notre Dame de Consolation, on the Hulluch road, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by S. of Vermelles.

Chapelle St. Roch, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. W. by N. of la Bassée.

Charleroi, on the Sambre, 30 m. S. by E. of Brussels.

Chateau Philomel, $7\frac{1}{2}$ m. W. by N. of Bethune.

Chateau Prieure St. Pry, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. SSW. of Bethune.

Chaulnes, 23 m. E. by S. of Amiens.

Chocolat Menier Corner, in British front line, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. south-west of Port Arthur (*q.v.*).

Chocques, 3 m. W. by N. of Bethune.

Choquaux, les, $2\frac{1}{4}$ m. N. by E. of Bethune.

Cinder Track, $1\frac{3}{8}$ m. SW. by S. of Neuve Chapelle, leading from Richebourg l'Avoué (*q.v.*) to Ferme du Bois (*q.v.*).

Cité St. Auguste, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. N. by E. of Lens.

Cité Edouard, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-west of Lens.

Cité St. Elie, on the la Bassée—Lens road, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. S. by E. of la Bassée.

Cité St. Emile, 1 m. NNW. of Lens.

Cité St. Laurent, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. NW. by N. of Lens.

Cité St. Pierre, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. WNW. of Lens.

Cité St. Pierre Mine Dump (Double Crassier), $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. WNW. of Lens.

Cité Spur (or Ridge), runs just north of Lens (Sketch A).

Clarke's Keep, British strong point at the north end of Vermelles (Map 9).

Cliqueterie Farm, la, 2 m. east of Neuve Chapelle.

Condé, at the junction of the Canal and the Schelde, 16 m. west of Mons (*q.v.*).

Cordonnerie Farm, la, 4 m. north-east of Neuve Chapelle.

Corons de Pekin, miners' cottages north of Fosse 8, 2 m. SSW. of la Bassée.

Corons de Rutoire, rows of miners' cottages $\frac{5}{8}$ m. S. by E. of Vermelles (*q.v.*).

Courrieres, 6 m. ENE. of Lens.

Courtrai, on the Lys, 16 m. E. by S. of Ypres.

Croix Barbée, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. WNW. of Neuve Chapelle.

Cse.¹ du Raux, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. NW. by N. of Festubert.

Guinchy, south of the Canal, 5 m. E. by S. of Bethune.

Curlu, on the Somme, 23 m. E. by N. of Amiens.

¹ Cse. = Cense (farm).

D

Delangre Farm, $3\frac{3}{4}$ m. NE. by E. of Neuve Chapelle.

Deynze, on the Lys, 30 m. ENE. of Ypres.

Distillery, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of Neuve Chapelle (Map 3).

Distillery (la Bassée), at the north end of la Bassée (Maps 3 and 5).

Don, on Deule canal, $12\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by N. of Bethune.

Douai, 15 m. ENE. of Arras.

Double Crassier, behind the German front line, 1 m. south-west of Loos.

Douvrin, 2 m. SE. by S. of la Bassée.

Duck's Bill (southern), in German front line opposite Givenchy, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. north of la Bassée canal.

Dump, The, the slagheap of Fosse 8, behind the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

Dury, $8\frac{1}{2}$ m. SSW. of Amiens.

Dynamitiere, a salient in the German second line, $1\frac{1}{8}$ m. SE. by E. of Loos.

E

Ecleme, 1', 5 m. NW. by W. of Bethune.

Ecluse d'Essars, on the Lawe canal, $1\frac{1}{8}$ m. NE. by N. of Bethune.

Ecurie, $2\frac{3}{4}$ m. north of Arras.

Embankment Redoubt, German front-line work south of la Bassée canal.

Eparges, les, $11\frac{1}{2}$ m. SE. by E. of Verdun.

Essars, $1\frac{1}{8}$ m. north-east of Bethune.

Etna, mine crater in No Man's Land south of la Bassée—Bethune road (Sketch 27).

F

Facons, les, 3 m. north-east of Bethune.

Farbus, 5 m. south of Lens.

Fauquissart, 2 m. NNE. of Neuve Chapelle.

- Ferme Cour d'Avoué**, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. NE. by E. of Festubert.
Ferme de Toulotte, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. S. by W. of Neuve Chapelle.
Ferme du Biez, $1\frac{1}{8}$ m. SSE. of Neuve Chapelle.
Ferme du Bois, 2 m. north-east of Festubert.
Festubert, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by N. of Bethune.
Ficheux, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. SSW. of Arras.
Flers, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNW. of Douai.
Folie Farm, la, on the Vimy Ridge, $5\frac{1}{4}$ m. N. by E. of Arras.
Foret de Nieppe, 4 m. SSE. of Hazebrouck (*q.v.*).
Fort Glatz, German work in the Loos defences, just north-west of Loos (Map 9).
Fosse 5 de Bethune, behind the British front line, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. WSW. of Loos.
Fosse 7, south of the Bethune—Lens road, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. W. by N. of Loos.
Fosse 8 de Bethune, behind the German front line, 2 m. SSW. of la Bassée.
Fosse 9 de Bethune, $4\frac{1}{4}$ m. WSW. of la Bassée.
Fosse 11, 1 m. SSW. of Loos.
Fosse 12 de Lens, at south-east end of Loos Crassier, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. north-west of Lens.
Fosse 13, at Cité St. Elie (*q.v.*).
Fouquereuil, 2 m. WSW. of Bethune.
Four à Chaux, $\frac{1}{4}$ m. south of Houchin (*q.v.*).
Fournes, $5\frac{1}{4}$ m. north-east of la Bassée.
Frasnes lez Buissenal, 25 m. E. by N. of Lille.
Frevent, 21 m. west of Arras.
Frezenberg Ridge, 8 m. ENE. of Ypres.
Fromelles, $8\frac{1}{2}$ m. ENE. of Neuve Chapelle.

G

- Garden City**, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of Loos.
Givenchy, Bois de, $8\frac{3}{4}$ m. SW. by W. of Lens.
Givenchy en Gohelle, $8\frac{3}{4}$ m. south-west of Lens.
Givenchy lez la Bassée, 5 m. east of Bethune.
Givet, on the Meuse, 50 m. SSE. of Brussels.
Glatignies, les, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-east of Bethune.
Godewaersvelde, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-west of Bailleul.
Gonnehem, $8\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-west of Bethune.
Gorlice, 75 m. south-east of Cracow (Galicia).
Gorre, $2\frac{3}{4}$ m. E. by N. of Bethune.
Grenay, $8\frac{1}{2}$ m. WNW. of Lens.
Grodno, 140 m. NE. by E. of Warsaw.

H

- Haie, la**, copse in No Man's Land, just south of the Vermelles—
Hulluch road (Sketch A).
Haillicourt, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. SW. by S. of Bethune.
Haisnes, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of la Bassée.
Hamel, le, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. NE. by E. of Bethune.
Harnes, $3\frac{1}{4}$ m. ENE. of Lens.
Hartmannswillerkopf, in Alsace, 20 m. NE. by N. of Belfort.
Haute Deule (canal), connects Lille with Lens and Douai (*q.v.*).
Hazebrouck, 14 m. NNW. of Bethune.
Hebuterne, 13 m. SSW. of Arras.
Helfaut, $3\frac{3}{4}$ m. S. by W. of St. Omer.
Henin Lietard, $5\frac{1}{4}$ m. E. by S. of Lens.
Herlies, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by S. of Neuve Chapelle.
Hersin, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. S. by E. of Bethune.
Hesdigneul, $2\frac{3}{4}$ m. south-west of Bethune.
Hill 60, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-east of Ypres.
Hill 70, 1 m. E. by S. of Loos.
Hill 70 Redoubt, a German work sited on the western face of
Hill 70, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. E. by S. of Loos.
Hinges, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNW. of Bethune.
Hirson, on the Oise, 64 m. ESE. of Arras.
Hohenzollern Redoubt, in the German front line, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. SW.
by S. of la Bassée (Sketch A).
Hooge, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by S. of Ypres.
Houchin, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. S. by W. of Bethune.
Hulluch, $3\frac{1}{4}$ m. S. by E. of la Bassée.

I

- Ilies**, $2\frac{3}{4}$ m. SE. by E. of Neuve Chapelle.
Isonzo, Italian river, flowing south into the Gulf of Trieste,
near the Austrian boundary.
Ivangorod, former Russian fortress on the Vistula, 50 m. south-
east of Warsaw.

K

- Kemmel**, $5\frac{1}{4}$ m. SW. by S. of Ypres.
King's Road, running north from the Rue du Bois, 3 m. WSW.
of Neuve Chapelle.

Knocke, on Belgian coast, 18 m. ENE. of Ostend.
Knocke, Old Fort of, on the Canal, 10 m. north of Ypres.
Kovno, on the Niemen, 110 m. east of Königsberg.

L

Labuissiere, 4 m. south-west of Bethune.
Labyrinthe, German front-line work 3 m. north of Arras.
Lacouture, 5 m. north-east of Bethune.
Laleau, 6 m. north-west of Bethune.
Lallaing, 4 m. ENE. of Douai.
Lapugnoy, 4 m. W. by S. of Bethune.
Laventie, 9 m. north-east of Bethune.
Leclercq Farm, $2\frac{3}{4}$ m. ENE. of Neuve Chapelle.
Lens Road Redoubt, German front-line work on the Bethune
 —Lens road, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. west of Loos.
Lestrem, 7 m. NNE. of Bethune.
Libercourt, $8\frac{1}{2}$ m. east of Hulluch (*q.v.*).
Liege, Belgian fortress on the Meuse, 55 m. E. by S. of Brussels.
Lievin, 2 m. SW. by W. of Lens.
Ligny le Grand, 2 m. ESE. of Neuve Chapelle.
Ligny le Petit, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-east of Neuve Chapelle.
Lillers, 7 m. WNW. of Bethune.
Limbouurg, Dutch province jutting south along the Meuse for
 80 miles, between Belgium and Germany.
Locon, 3 m. NNE. of Bethune.
Loisne, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. ENE. of Bethune.
Loison (sous Lens), $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. ENE. of Lens.
Lone Farm, $\frac{1}{4}$ m. SSW. of Auchy (*q.v.*).
Lone Tree, a solitary, shattered tree in No Man's Land, on the
 ridge $\frac{5}{8}$ m. south of the Vermelles—Hulluch Road (Sketch
 A).
Loos, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-west of Lens.
Loos Cemetery, immediately WSW. of Loos.
Loos Crassier, the long slagheap running south-east from
 Loos.
Loos Pylons (Tower Bridge), immediately south of Loos, at
 the northern end of Loos Crassier.
Loos Road Redoubt, German front-line work on the Vermelles
 —Loos road, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. north-west of Loos.
Lorgies, $1\frac{5}{8}$ m. north of la Bassée.
Lozinghem, 6 m. W. by S. of Bethune.
Lumbres, $6\frac{1}{2}$ m. WSW. of St. Omer.
Lys, River, flows through Aire, Armentieres, and Menin, and
 joins the Schelde at Ghent.

M

Madagascar, houses behind the German front line, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. north-east of Vermelles.

Mad Point, German front-line work, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-east of Vermelles.

Maisnil, 1e, 5 m. ENE. of Neuve Chapelle.

Maison des Mitrailleurs, just behind the British front line, at the north-eastern extremity of North Maroc (Map 9).

Malines (Mechlin), 18 m. NNE. of Brussels.

Marequet, 1e, 4 m. west of Bethune.

Marles les Mines, 6 m. WSW. of Bethune.

Maroc, North and South, a mining village, $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. WSW. of Loos.

Marquillies, $3\frac{1}{4}$ m. NE. by E. of la Bassée.

Marquois, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. NW. by N. of Bethune.

Masuria, district in south-east corner of East Prussia.

Maubeuge, French fortress on the Sambre, 52 m. east of Arras and 18 m. south of Mons.

Mazingarbe, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-east of Bethune.

Menin, on the Lys, 11 m. ESE. of Ypres.

Meri-court, $2\frac{5}{8}$ m. south-east of Lens.

Merville, on the Lys, 8 m. north of Bethune.

Mesplaux, $3\frac{1}{8}$ m. north-east of Bethune.

Messines, 6 m. south of Ypres.

Metzeral, 87 m. NNE. of Belfort.

Meurchin, on the Haute Deule Canal, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. SE. by E. of la Bassée.

Mezieres, on the Meuse, 50 m. below Verdun.

Middelkerke, on Belgian coast, 5 m. SW. by W. of Ostend.

Monchy au Bois, 9 m. SW. by S. of Arras.

Mort Mare, a wood, 15 m. E. by N. of St. Mihiel (*q.v.*).

Moulin du Pietre, on the Layes Brook, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. north-east of Neuve Chapelle.

N

Nasiriya, on the Euphrates, 100 m. WNW. of Basra.

Neuve Chapelle, $7\frac{1}{2}$ m. ENE. of Bethune.

Neuville St. Vaast, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. north of Arras.

Nieuport, at the mouth of the Yser, 20 m. north of Ypres.

Nivelles, 18 m. S. by W. of Brussels.

Noeux les Mines, $3\frac{3}{4}$ m. SSE. of Bethune.

Notre Dame de Lorette, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. WSW. of Lens.

Nouvion, le, 55 m. N. by W. of Reims.

Novo Georgievsk, former Russian fortress on the Vistula,
15 m. below Warsaw.

Noyelles, $4\frac{3}{4}$ m. south-east of Bethune.

Noyon Salient, the angle formed by the German front line
across the Oise, 40 m. WNW. of Reims.

O

Orchard, The, in British front line, $3\frac{1}{4}$ m. north-east of Neuve
Chapelle.

Orchard, The, later **Canadian Orchard**, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. ENE. of
Festubert.

Orchard Redoubt, British work, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-west of Port
Arthur cross-roads (Map 3).

Orchies, $13\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-east of Lille.

P

Petit Vimy, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. west of Vimy (*q.v.*).

Philosophe, a block of miners' cottages on the Bethune—Lens
road, 5 m. north-west of Lens.

Picantin, 3 m. NNE. of Neuve Chapelle.

Pietre, 1 m. ENE. of Neuve Chapelle.

Pilckem, $8\frac{1}{2}$ m. north of Ypres.

Place à Bruay, in the Lawe valley, 1 m. NE. by E. of Bruay
(*q.v.*).

Ploegsteert, 3 m. north of Armentieres.

Plouich, le, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. E. by N. of Neuve Chapelle.

Point 69, on the Lens—Bethune road, 2 m. north-west of
Lens.

Point du Jour, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. NE. by E. of Arras.

Pont à Vendin, on the Haute Deule Canal, 4 m. north-east
of Lens.

Pope's Nose Redoubt, German front-line work, $\frac{5}{8}$ m. south-
east of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

Port Arthur, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. SSW. of Neuve Chapelle.

Pretre, le, a wood, near the Moselle, 22 m. E. by N. of St. Mihiel (*q.v.*).

Prieure St. Pry, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of Bethune.

Princes road, 1 m. north-east of Festubert; it connects the Rue du Bois and the Rue des Cailloux.

Prosnes, 12 m. ESE. of Reims.

Przemysl, former Austrian fortress in Galicia, 300 m. ENE. of Vienna.

Puits 13 bis, near Stützpunkt III., $\frac{1}{2}$ m. SSE. of Hulluch (*q.v.*).

Puits 14 bis, on the Lens—la Bassée road, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. ENE. of Loos.

Puits 15, at the eastern edge of Loos.

* **Pylon Towers (Tower Bridge)**, immediately south of Loos, at the northern end of the Loos Crassier.

Q

Quadrilateral, German front-line work, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. north-east of Festubert.

Quality Street, a row of miners' cottages at the foot of Fosse 7 on the Bethune—Lens road, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. WNW. of Loos.

Quarries, The, on the Loos battlefield, $2\frac{1}{4}$ m. E. by N. of Vermelles (Sketch A).

Quennevieres, north of the Aisne, 11 m. ENE. of Compiègne.

Quesnoy, le, 40 m. east of Arras and 20 m. south-west of Mons.

Quinque Rue, la, road running north-eastwards from Festubert.

R

Railway Redoubt, German front-line work, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. WSW. of Auchy (*q.v.*).

Railway Triangle, $1\frac{3}{8}$ m. WSW. of la Bassée.

Railway Wood, 2 m. east of Ypres.

Richebourg l'Avoué, on the Rue du Bois (*q.v.*), $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-west of Neuve Chapelle.

Richebourg St. Vaast, 2 m. W. by S. of Neuve Chapelle.

Robecq, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. NW. by N. of Bethune.

Roclincourt, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNE. of Arras.

Roubaix, sister town of Lille, lying north-east of it.

- Rouges Bances**, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-east of Neuve Chapelle.
Rue de l'Epinette, runs north from Rue des Cailloux, $\frac{3}{8}$ m. N. by E. of Festubert (Sketch 8).
Rue d'Ouvert, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. east of Festubert.
Rue des Berceaux, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. WSW. of Neuve Chapelle.
Rue des Cailloux, road running north-eastwards, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. north of Festubert.
Rue du Bois, road running south-west from Port Arthur (*q.v.*).
Rue du Marais, 2 m. E. by N. of Festubert.
Ruit, 5 m. SSW. of Bethune.
Russie, la, a farm, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. ESE. of Neuve Chapelle.
Rutoire, **Corons de**, rows of miners' cottages, $\frac{5}{8}$ m. S. by E. of Vermelles (*q.v.*).
Rutoire, la, a large farm behind the British front line, $\frac{7}{8}$ m. ESE. of Vermelles (*q.v.*).

S

- Sailly**, on the Lys, 5 m. north of Neuve Chapelle.
Sailly Labourse, $3\frac{1}{4}$ m. SE. by E. of Bethune.
St. Eloï, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of Ypres.
St. Georges, on the Yser Canal, 19 m. north of Ypres.
St. Jean, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. north-east of Ypres.
St. Mihiel, on the Meuse, 20 m. above Verdun.
St. Omer, 28 m. W. by S. of Ypres.
St. Pol, 17 m. south-west of Bethune.
St. Quentin, 45 m. E. by S. of Amiens.
St. Venant, on the Lys, 8 m. NW. by N. of Bethune.
Sanctuary Wood, south-east of Hooze.
Savy, $12\frac{1}{2}$ m. WSW. of Lens.
Scarpe, River, runs through Arras and Douai (*q.v.*), and enters the Schelde 8 m. above Tournai (*q.v.*).
Schelde, River, flows through Cambrai, Valenciennes, Ghent, and Antwerp, and enters the North Sea at Flushing.
School House, $1\frac{1}{4}$ m. ENE. of Festubert.
Seclin, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. S. by W. of Lille.
Sedan, on the Meuse, 42 m. NNW. of Verdun.
Serre, 22 m. NE. by E. of Amiens.
Slit Redoubt, German front-line work, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. south-east of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.
Smyrna, in Asia Minor, 200 m. SW. by S. of Constantinople.
Somain, railway junction, 23 m. E. by N. of Arras.
Souchez, $4\frac{3}{4}$ m. SW. by W. of Lens.

- Spurn Head**, German sap, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. south-east of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.
- Stafford Corner**, in German communication trench, 1 m. ENE. of Festubert.
- Steenstraat**, on the canal, 5 m. north of Ypres.
- Strazeele**, 14 m. S.W. by W. of Ypres.
- Strong Point**, a sap projecting from Little Willie (Hohenzollern Redoubt).
- Stützpunkt I., II., III., IV., and V.**, strong points in the German second line, Loos battlefield (Sketch A).
- Stützpunkt 69**, close to the Bethune—Lens road, at the south-west end of Chalk Pit Copse (*q.v.*).

T

- Tahure**, in Champagne, 28 m. east of Reims.
- Targette**, la, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. N. by W. of Arras.
- Tarnow**, 40 m. east of Cracow (Galicia).
- Tergnier**, railway junction in the Oise valley, 47 m. ESE. of Amiens.
- Therouanne**, on the Lys above Aire, 18 m. WNW. of Bethune.
- Thourout**, 18 m. NE. by N. of Ypres.
- Thrèe Cabarets**, $\frac{1}{8}$ m. NE. by E. of Fosse 8 (*q.v.*).
- Tilleuls**, les, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. N. by E. of Arras.
- Tortoise Redoubt**, German front-line work north of la Bassée Canal.
- Tourcoing**, sister town, NNE. of Lille.
- Tourelle**, la, on the la Bassée—Estaires road, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. NE. by E. of Festubert.
- Touret**, le, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. NE. by E. of Bethune.
- Tournai**, on the Schelde, 27 m. ENE. of Lens.
- Tournebride Estaminet**, at the cross-roads, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. WNW. of Hulluch (*q.v.*).
- Touvent Farm**, $1\frac{3}{8}$ m. west of Serre (*q.v.*).
- Tower Bridge (Loos Pylons)**, immediately south of Loos, at the northern end of the Loos Crassier.

U

- Uskub**, on the Vardar, 125 m. NW. by N. of Salonika.

V

- Valenciennes**, on the Schelde, 33 m. E. by N. of Arras and 20 m. WSW. of Mons.
- Valley Cross Roads**, the junction of the Bethune—Lens and South Maroc—Loos roads, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. SW. by W. of Loos.
- Vaudricourt**, 2 m. S. by W. of Bethune.
- Vauquois**, 15 m. W. by N. of Verdun.
- Vendin le Vieil**, on the Haute Deule Canal, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. NE. by N. of Lens.
- Vendin lez Bethune**, $1\frac{1}{2}$ m. NW. by W. of Bethune.
- Vendin (Pont à)**, on the Haute Deule Canal, 4 m. north-east of Lens.
- Vermelles**, $5\frac{1}{2}$ m. SE. by E. of Bethune.
- Verquigneul**, $2\frac{3}{8}$ m. SE. by S. of Bethune.
- Verquin**, 2 m. south of Bethune.
- Vesuvius**, mine crater in No Man's Land south of la Bassée—Bethune road (Sketch 27).
- Vielle Chapelle**, $3\frac{1}{2}$ m. W. by N. of Neuve Chapelle.
- Ville sur Tourbe**, 35 m. E. by S. of Reims.
- Vimy**, 6 m. NNE. of Arras.
- Vimy, Petit**, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. west of Vimy.
- Vimy Ridge**, the 3-mile ridge lying to the west of Vimy (*q.v.*).
- Violaines**, $\frac{7}{8}$ m. north-west of la Bassée.

W

- Wavrin**, $6\frac{1}{2}$ m. SW. by W. of Lille.
- Waziers**, 2 m. north-east of Douai.
- Westende**, on Belgian coast, 8 m. SW. by W. of Ostend.
- Willow Corner**, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. ESE. of Festubert.
- Wingles**, $3\frac{1}{4}$ m. south-east of la Bassée.
- Woivre**, district east of Verdun.
- Wyttschaete**, $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. south of Ypres.

Z

- Zouave Wood**, south of the Menin road, $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. ESE. of Ypres.

LIST OF FOREIGN BOOKS

TO WHICH MORE THAN A SINGLE REFERENCE IS MADE

BAVARIAN OFFICIAL ACCOUNT: "Die Bayern im grossen Kriege 1914-1918". Herausgegeben vom Bayerischen Kriegsarchiv. (Munich: Verlag des Bayerischen Kriegsarchiv.)

An official account of the operations of the Bavarian forces.

BUAT: "L'Armée allemande pendant la guerre de 1914-1918". By General Buat. (Paris: Chapelot.)

The late General Buat was Chief of the Staff of the French Army after the war until his death at the end of 1923.

FALKENHAYN: "General Headquarters 1914-1916 and its Critical Decisions". By General Erich von Falkenhayn. (English translation, Hutchinson & Co. 21s.)

Falkenhayn was Prussian Minister of War in 1914; and Chief of the General Staff from September 1914 to August 1916, when he was superseded by Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. The book deals mostly with the German successes in the Russian theatre of war, but contains much of importance as regards decisions in the West.

FRENCH OFFICIAL ACCOUNT: "Les Armées Françaises dans la Grande Guerre", compiled in the État-Major de l'Armée Service Historique. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.) Tome iii., with four volumes of "annexes" and a case of maps, deals with the period from 1st May 1915 up to the 21st February 1916, the beginning of the battle of Verdun. The narrative is brief and rarely mentions any formation or unit below a division. The "annexes" contain documents.

HIERL: "Der Weltkrieg in Umrissen", Vols. I., II. and III. By Lieut.-Colonel Constantin Hierl. (Charlottenburg: Verlag "Offene Worte".)

An important summary of and commentary on the war, used, it is understood, for instructional purposes in the *Reichswehr*.

OEHMICHEN : "Essai sur la doctrine de Guerre des Coalitions. La Direction de la Guerre (Novembre 1914-Mars 1917)". By Colonel Oehmichen. (Paris : Berger-Levrault.)

An authoritative work, based on official documents, concerning the general direction of the war by General Joffre. Colonel Oehmichen was one of the two officers detailed by General Joffre in December 1915 to organize a section of 3rd Bureau (Operations) to co-ordinate the Allied operations.

PALAT : "La Grande Guerre sur le Front Occidental". Vol. IX. By General Palat. (Paris : Berger-Levrault.)

A valuable unofficial compilation as regards the movements of the French. The ninth volume describes the December battle of 1914 and the offensives of 1915. The author is best known by his pseudonym, "Pierre Lehautcourt".

REGT. NO. . . . These are the regimental war histories of German units. Nearly all of them are in the series "Erinnerungsblätter deutscher Regimenter", published by Gerhard Stalling of Oldenburg. The history of the 5 Westfälisches Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 53, for instance, is quoted as "Regt. No. 53". The volumes in the series are of varying length and value ; some give detailed accounts of the fighting with extracts from the reminiscences of combatants ; others merely reproduce the official war diaries.

SCHWARTE ii. : "Der deutsche Landkrieg. Zweiter Teil : Vom Frühjahr 1915 bis zum Winter 1916-1917". Herausgegeben von Lieut.-General M. Schwarte. (Leipzig : Barth.)

A general history of the war by various authorities. The chapters on the German defensive battles on the Western Front were written by the late Lieut.-General W. Balck.

Note.—The first volume of the series "Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914, Mons, the Retreat to the Seine, The Marne, The Aisne, August-October 1914", is quoted as "1914" Vol. I. ;

The second volume "Antwerp, La Bassée, Armentières, Messines, and Ypres, October-November 1914", as "1914" Vol. II. ;

The third volume "Winter 1914-15, Neuve Chapelle and Ypres, 1915", as "1915" Vol. I.

CALENDAR OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS

Mainly extracted from "Principal Events 1914-18" compiled by the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence, London. His Majesty's Stationery Office. 10s. 6d. net.

Western Theatre.		Other Theatres.	Naval Warfare and General Events.
MAY 1915			
1st-4th.	Battle of St. Julien continued.	<i>Eastern</i> : Battle of Gorlice-Tarnow (Austro-German offensive) begins.	4th. Italy denounces the Triple Alliance.
8th-18th.	Battle of Frezenberg Ridge.	6th-8th. <i>Dardanelles</i> : Second Battle of Krithia.	7th. "Lusitania" sunk.
9th.	Battle of Aubers Ridge.	13th. <i>German South-West Africa</i> : Windhuk occupied.	
15th.	Battle of Festubert begins.	19th-21st. <i>Dardanelles</i> : Defence of Anzac.	23rd. Italy declares war against Austria.
24th-25th.	Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge. End of Battles of Ypres 1915.	24th. <i>Eastern</i> : Battle of Przemyśl begins. <i>Italian</i> : Italians cross Austrian frontier at midnight 24th-25th.	26th. Mr. W. S. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, resigns and (27th) is succeeded by Mr. A. J. Balfour.
25th.	Battle of Festubert ends.	31st. <i>Mesopotamian</i> : Second Action of Qurna, Advance up the Tigris.	

CALENDAR OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS—(continued)

Western Theatre.		Other Theatres.	Naval Warfare and General Events.
		JUNE 1915	
1st.	Second Battle of Artois continued.		
2nd.	Germans capture Hooge chateau.	3rd.	<i>Eastern</i> : Przemyśl retaken by Austro-German forces.
		4th.	<i>Mesopotamian</i> : Amara captured.
7th-18th.	French action near Hébuterne.		7th. First Meeting of Dardanelles Committee of the Cabinet. ¹
6th-16th.	French action near Quen-nevières.		9th. Ministry of Munitions Act passed.
		10th.	
		11th.	<i>Cameroons</i> : Garua capitulates.
			<i>Eastern</i> : Battle of Przemyśl ends.
15th, 16th.	Second action of Givenchy.	17th.	<i>Eastern</i> : Third Battle of Lemberg begins.
16th.	First attack on Bellewaarde.		<i>S.W. Africa</i> : Advance on Otavi-fountain begins.
18th.	Second Battle of Artois ends.	19th.	
			<i>Eastern</i> : Third Battle of Lemberg ends.
20th.	German attack in the Ar-gonne begins.	22nd.	
			23rd. French Armies organized into three groups.
			26th. General Sukhomlinov, Russian Minister of War, removed from office.
		27th.	<i>Mesopotamian</i> : Advance up the Eu-phrates begins.
		28th.	<i>Dardanelles</i> : Action of Gully Ravine.
		29th.	<i>Italian</i> : First Battle of the Isonzo begins.

¹ See "1914" Vol. II. p. 10.

2nd. Ministry of Munitions organized
7th. First inter-allied military conference at Chantilly.
15th. National Registration Act becomes law.
17th. Treaty of Alliance signed between Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany and Turkey.
25th. British Government guarantees cession of Mitylene to Greece.
30th. The Pope sends appeal for peace to belligerent governments.
15th. National register taken in Great Britain.
21st. Italy declares war on Turkey.
22nd. M. Venizelos again becomes Greek Premier.

JULY 1915
7th. *Italian* : First battle of the Isonzo ends.
9th. *S.W. Africa* : Capitulation of Germans to General Botha.

18th. *Italian* : Second Battle of the Isonzo begins.
21st. *Eastern* : Ivangorod invested (see 5th Aug.).

19th. Action of Hooge crater.
24th. German attacks in the Ar-gonne end.
30th-31st. German attack with liquid fire at Hooge.

AUGUST 1915

5th. *Eastern* : Warsaw occupied by Germans ; Ivangorod taken.
6th. *Dardanelles* : Landing at Suvla. Battle of Sari Bair begins.

10th. *Dardanelles* : Battle of Sari Bair ends.
Italian : Second Battle of the Isonzo ends.

17th. *Eastern* : Kovno captured by Germans.
20th. *Eastern* : Novo-Georgievsk captured by the Germans.
21st. *Dardanelles* : Battle of Suvla ends. Offensive operations end.

25th. *Eastern* : Brest-Litovsk captured by the Germans.

CALENDAR OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS—(continued)

Western Theatre.	Other Theatres.	Naval Warfare and General Events.
SEPTEMBER 1915		
3rd. <i>Eastern</i> : Grodno captured by the Germans.		
5th. <i>Eastern</i> : The Grand Duke Nicholas superseded.		
7th. <i>Eastern</i> : Russian counter-attack in Galicia ; battle of Tarnopol begins.		
16th. <i>Eastern</i> : Battle of Tarnopol ends.		
18th. <i>Eastern</i> : Vilna taken by the Germans.		
22nd. <i>Cameroons</i> : Second advance on Yaunde begins.		
		9th. U.S.A. request recall of Austro-Hungarian Ambassador (Dr. Dumba).
		11th. Calais conference re sending troops to Salonika.
		22nd. Bulgaria orders general mobilization for 25th.
		Greek Premier (M. Venizelos) asks for guarantee of 150,000 British and French troops as condition of Greek intervention.
		24th. French and British governments agree to Greek request of the 22nd.
		25th. General Sir J. Wolfe Murray, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Great Britain, resigns.
		26th. Lieut.-General Sir A. J. Murray appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Great Britain.
		27th. King Constantine consents to proposed Entente expedition to Salonika.
		28th. Greek Government formally refuse guarantee of the 24th.
		30th. Lord Derby assumes control of recruiting.
25th.	Battle of Loos begins. Third Battle of Artois begins. Second Battle of Champagne begins.	
26th.	Close of the first period of the Third Battle of Artois.	
30th.	Close of the first period of the Second Battle of Champagne.	
28th.	Close of the first period of the Third Battle of Artois.	
30th.	Close of the first period of the Second Battle of Champagne.	
28th.	<i>Mesopotamian</i> : Battle of Kut.	

OCTOBER 1915

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|------------|---|-------|--|
| 6th. | Renewed French offensive in Champagne. | 2nd. | <i>Eastern</i> : Battle of Vilna ends. |
| 7th. | Official end of the Second Battle of Champagne. | 3rd. | <i>Balkan</i> : Allied Forces arrive at Salonika. |
| 8th. | Official end of the battle of Loos. | 5th. | <i>Balkan</i> : Allied Forces land at Salonika. |
| 11th. | Renewed French offensive in Artois. | 6th. | <i>Balkan</i> : Austro-German armies begin the final invasion of Serbia. |
| 18th-19th. | Actions of the Hohenzollern Redoubt. | 9th. | <i>Balkan</i> : Belgrade taken. |
| 15th. | Official end of the Third Battle of Artois. | 11th. | <i>Balkan</i> : Bulgarian forces cross Serbian frontier. |
| | | 14th. | <i>Balkan</i> : Bulgaria declares war on Serbia. |
| | | 18th. | <i>Italian</i> : Third Battle of the Isonzo begins. |
| | | 20th. | <i>Dardanelles</i> : General Sir C. C. Monro takes over command from Sir Ian Hamilton. |
| | | 30th. | <i>Eastern</i> : Battle of Siemikowce begins. |
| | | 12th. | Miss Edith Cavell shot by the Germans. |
| | | 18th. | Great Britain severs diplomatic relations with Bulgaria. |
| | | 30th. | Last meeting of the Dardanelles Committee of the Cabinet. |
| | | | M. Viviani resigns the French Premiership and is succeeded by M. Briand. |

NOVEMBER 1915

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|------|--|------|--|
| 3rd. | <i>Italian</i> : Third Battle of the Isonzo ends. | 3rd. | First meeting of the newly constituted War Committee of the Cabinet. |
| 5th. | <i>Eastern</i> : Austro-German offensive ends.
<i>Balkan</i> : Nish captured by the Bulgarians. | | |

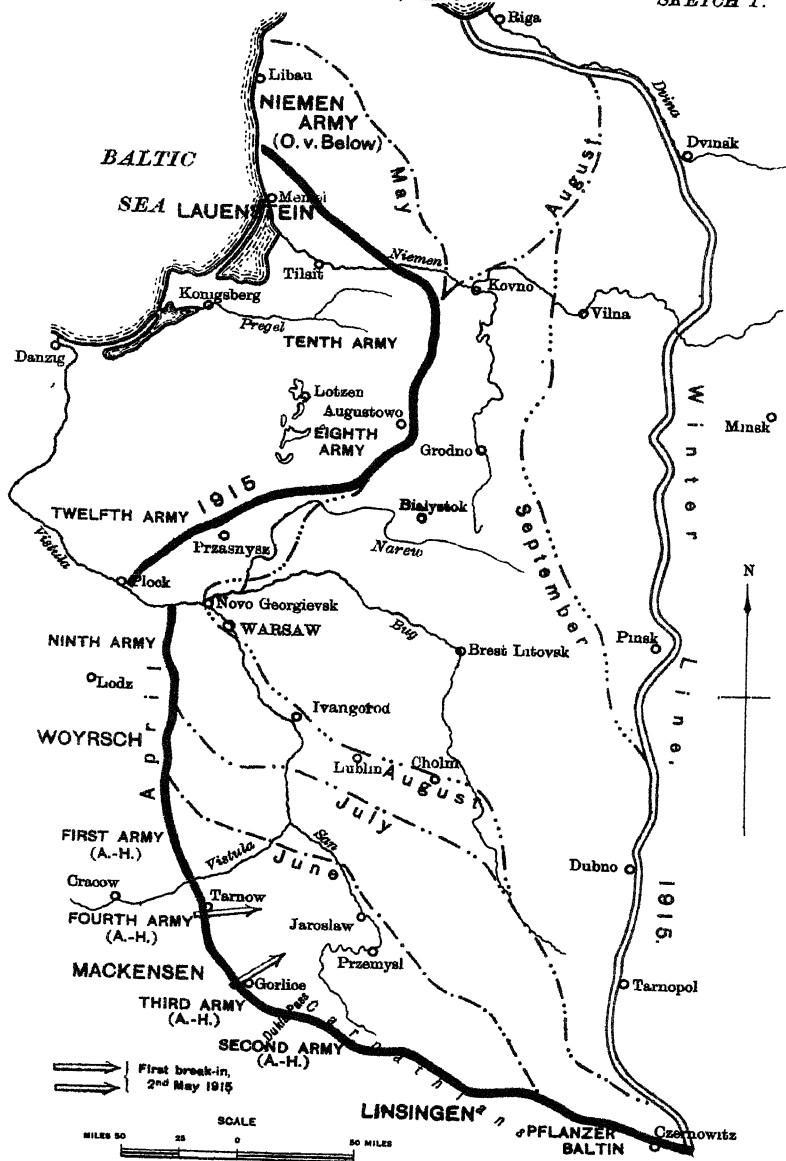
CALENDAR OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS—(concluded)

Western Theatre.	Other Theatres.	Naval Warfare and General Events.
NOVEMBER 1915—(continued)		
10th.	<i>Italian</i> : Fourth Battle of the Isonzo begins.	
11th.	<i>Mesopotamian</i> : First British advance on Baghdad begins.	
14th.	<i>Egypt</i> : Senussi begins hostilities by attacking Sollum.	
22nd-24th.	<i>Mesopotamian</i> : Battle of Ctesiphon.	24th. Lord Kitchener arrives at the Dardanelles.
30th.	<i>Balkan</i> : Serbian retreat through Albania begins.	
DECEMBER 1915		
2nd.	<i>Balkan</i> : Monastir captured by the Bulgarians.	3rd. General Joffre appointed Commander-in-Chief of all French Armies.
7th.	<i>Mesopotamian</i> : Siege of Kut begins.	
8th.	<i>Dardanelles</i> : Evacuation ordered.	9th. General de Castelneau appointed Chief of Staff to General Joffre.
10th.	<i>Italian</i> : Fourth battle of the Isonzo ends.	
15th.	<i>Balkan</i> : Last French and British forces in Macedonia withdrawn into Greek territory.	17th. F.M. Sir J. French resigns command in France.
20th.	<i>Dardanelles</i> : Evacuation of Suvla and Anzac completed.	19th. General Sir D. Haig succeeds Sir J. French.
28th.	<i>Dardanelles</i> : Evacuation of remainder of Gallipoli peninsula ordered.	

SKETCH 1

EASTERN FRONT 1915. SHOWING THE GERMAN-AUSTRIAN ADVANCE.

SKETCH 1.



CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE OF AUBERS RIDGE, 9TH MAY 1915

THE PREPARATIONS

(Maps 1, 2 ; Sketches B, 1, 2, 3, 4)

THE PLAN FOR A COMBINED FRANCO-BRITISH OFFENSIVE

THE closing chapters of the previous volume¹ contained the narrative of the series of actions known as the Second Battle of Ypres. Begun by the Germans on the 22nd April 1915 with the first use of poison gas, this fighting had continued until the 25th May. Mention was made that the enemy attack anticipated, but did not prevent or delay, a Franco-British offensive, then in preparation, which opened on the 9th May. But this Allied offensive was not described, and the narrative must now go back to deal with its conception and execution.

Throughout the winter of 1914-15 the Central Powers **Sketch 1.** had carried on operations against Russia. In the Winter Battle of Masuria (4th-22nd February 1915) the Germans had liberated East Prussia from the Russians, but had not broken the Russian front and strategically had gained nothing. In a February-March offensive in the Carpathians the Austrians had re-occupied the Bukovina, but had not succeeded in relieving Przemyśl, which capitulated on the 22nd March. As spring approached it became certain that the German Supreme Command was preparing a great offensive on the Eastern front, and to strengthen it further reductions in the German forces on the Western front had been made.² Every consideration therefore pointed to the

¹ "1915" Vol. I.

² See "1914" Vol. II. p. 372 and "1915" Vol. I. p. 24.

During March and April eight divisions were added to the German forces on the Eastern front, some 100,000 men, organized into an *Eleventh*

advantages which the Allies would derive by using the opportunity to drive the invader out of France and Belgium, whilst his reserves were engaged elsewhere. Not only sympathy for Russia, but their own interests, as well as sound strategy, counselled that the Allied armies in the Western and other theatres should afford what relief they could to the forces of the Tzar by means of a speedy attack. For should the enemy succeed in decisively defeating the Russian armies, or even in driving them well back into the interior of their country, he would be in a position to mass superior numbers against the French, Belgians and British, as, in fact, he was able to do in March 1918, three years later, after the Russian collapse.

March.
Map 1.

The conversations on the subject between French and British General Headquarters had been resumed after the battle of Neuve Chapelle.¹ General Joffre on the 24th March had enquired whether the British would be prepared to co-operate in an offensive for which the French would be ready in five or six weeks' time, and on the 1st April Sir John French had replied that he hoped to be in a position to do so about the end of the month. On the 6th April, some two weeks before the Germans began the Second Battle of Ypres, General Joffre sent to Sir John French through General Foch the details of his plan for a combined offensive towards the plain of Douai and Aubers ridge.² This offensive was but a step in one of the three operations against the enemy communications proposed in the general French plan already described,³ operations which for lack

Army, with a full complement of heavy artillery, being transferred to Galicia. With the exception of the two divisions of the *Guard Corps* (1st *Guard Division* from Champagne, and 2nd from Cambrai), these eight divisions were new ones, formed by withdrawing units from different parts of the line along the entire Western front, certain old divisions being reduced from 12 to 9 battalions (see "1915" Vol. I. p. 87). Another, called the *Alpine Corps*, but only a division in strength, formed of selected units, was sent to the Italian front, in view of the hostilities which now appeared inevitable. Buat, pp. 28-9, states that in April 1915 there were 105 German divisions on the Western and 57 on the Eastern front (there were 104 in all in August 1914); in May, 106 and 64, respectively. Of the 106 in France and Belgium, Intelligence reports show that 92 were holding the front line, leaving 14 in reserve.

Falkenhayn, pp. 294-5, puts the number of troops "at the end of April 1915," as 639,000 German and 664,000 Austro-Hungarians, total 1,303,000, against 1,767,000 Russians; and "beginning of May 1915," 1,900,000 Germans in the Western theatre, the enemy numbering 2,450,000.

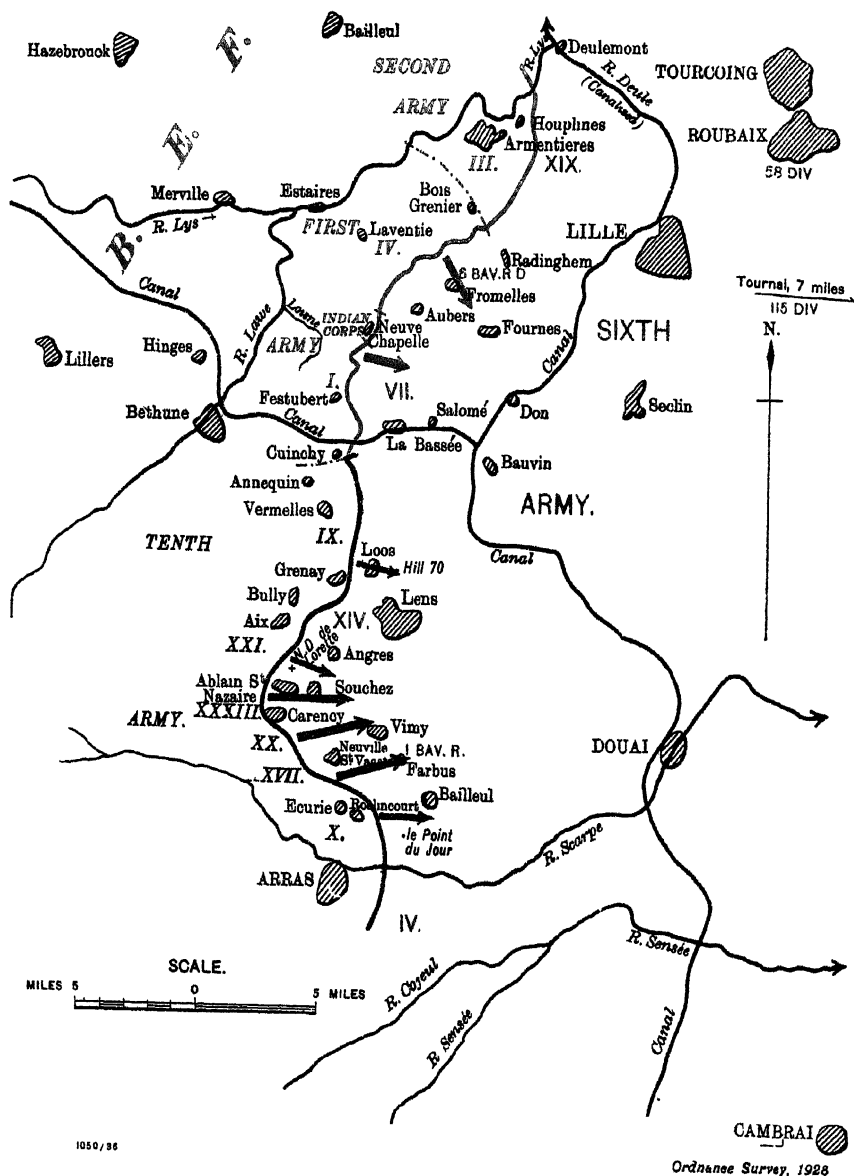
¹ "1915" Vol. I. pp. 154-5.

² Appendix 4.

³ "1915" Vol. I. p. 68. The three operations were advances

(1) from the Artois plateau eastwards, across the plain of Douai to the

THE ALLIED OFFENSIVES, MAY 1915.



of sufficient men and munitions General Joffre could not March. carry out simultaneously as he wished.

In summarizing his new plan to Sir John French, **Sketch B.** General Joffre wrote: "In the last days of April the French Tenth Army, acting in concert with the British First Army, will undertake an important attack north of Arras with a view to piercing the enemy's line. In order to carry out this attack the Tenth Army will be strongly reinforced—it will consist of fourteen infantry divisions (exclusive of Territorial divisions) and about 220 heavy guns and more than 720 field guns and howitzers."

The French Tenth Army, under General d'Urbal, held the line on the immediate right of the British First Army, from Cuinchy, opposite Givenchy on the La Bassée canal, southwards to beyond Arras, a frontage of over twenty miles. From the swampy ground near the canal the line of trenches passed, by Vermelles and Grenay, on to the chalk foothills of the Artois plateau. South of Grenay the ground rises steeply for three hundred feet to the commanding ridge of Notre Dame de Lorette, which forms the northern edge of the Artois plateau. The French line crossed this ridge immediately west of the Notre Dame de Lorette chapel; and thence took its way across the plateau by Ablain St. Nazaire and Roclincourt to the east of Arras. In front of the centre of this line, between Notre Dame de Lorette and Roclincourt, and at an average distance of 5,000 yards from it, lay Vimy ridge which forms the eastern edge of the plateau. Here the ground falls to the plain of Douai even more abruptly than it does from Notre Dame de Lorette, on the northern side, to the plain of Flanders.

The main attack of the French Tenth Army was to be **Sketch 2.** delivered on a frontage of four miles by its three centre corps, $2\frac{1}{2}$ divisions and the II. Cavalry Corps being in reserve, with the crest of Vimy ridge between Farbus and Souchez as its objective. Established there, the French would overlook the plain of Douai. The occupation of the ridge was to be the first step in breaking the German line, and preparatory to an advance into the plain to the line Cambrai—Douai.

The French main attack was to be supplemented by

German communication centres in the Noyon salient (the south-western angle of the German western front) ;

- (2) from about Reims against the Mezières—Hirson railway, and subsequently the railways in the gap between the Ardennes and Holland.
- (3) from Verdun—Nancy northwards to the Rhine crossings.

March. three subsidiary attacks, one to the south, and the other two to the north, not as diversions, but as auxiliary operations.¹ The first was to be delivered, simultaneously with the main attack, in order to give additional freedom of movement on the right during the subsequent advance into the plain of Douai. Of the two northern attacks one was to take place on the day previous to the main attack, for the purpose of capturing the eastern spur of Notre Dame de Lorette that lay on the flank of the main line of advance. The other attack (by the IX. Corps) was not to be launched until the day following the main attack when the result of that operation was known. Its object would be to widen the gap in the German line and assist the left flank of the French advance into the plain of Douai.

The attack of the British First Army, north of the La Bassée canal, was to be delivered after the main attack, on the same day as that of the IX. Corps last mentioned. Its object was to extend still further the breach in the German defences and prevent the despatch of German reinforcements from the north of the canal to the plain of Douai. The British attack was to be directed, as already discussed between French G.Q.G. and British G.H.Q. prior to the battle of Neuve Chapelle, towards Aubers ridge and La Bassée.² A group of French heavy artillery, placed in position south of the canal between Annequin and Vermelles, was to support the right of the British attack as well as the left of the French IX. Corps.

Sketch 3. The details of the plan were left for arrangement between General Foch, commanding the "Groupe Provisoire" of the French Armies of the North, and Sir John French.

April. On the 9th April the latter informed General Foch that he was prepared to employ ten divisions³ and about one hundred heavy and five hundred field guns in the operation, and that he would have in reserve five cavalry divisions. The object of the main attack of the British First Army would be, he said, to break through the enemy's line north of the La Bassée canal and reach the La Bassée—Lille road between La Bassée and Fournes. This main attack would be made from the front Festubert—Neuve Chapelle by the I. and Indian Corps, whilst a secondary attack was carried out by the IV. Corps in the direction of Aubers—Fromelles.

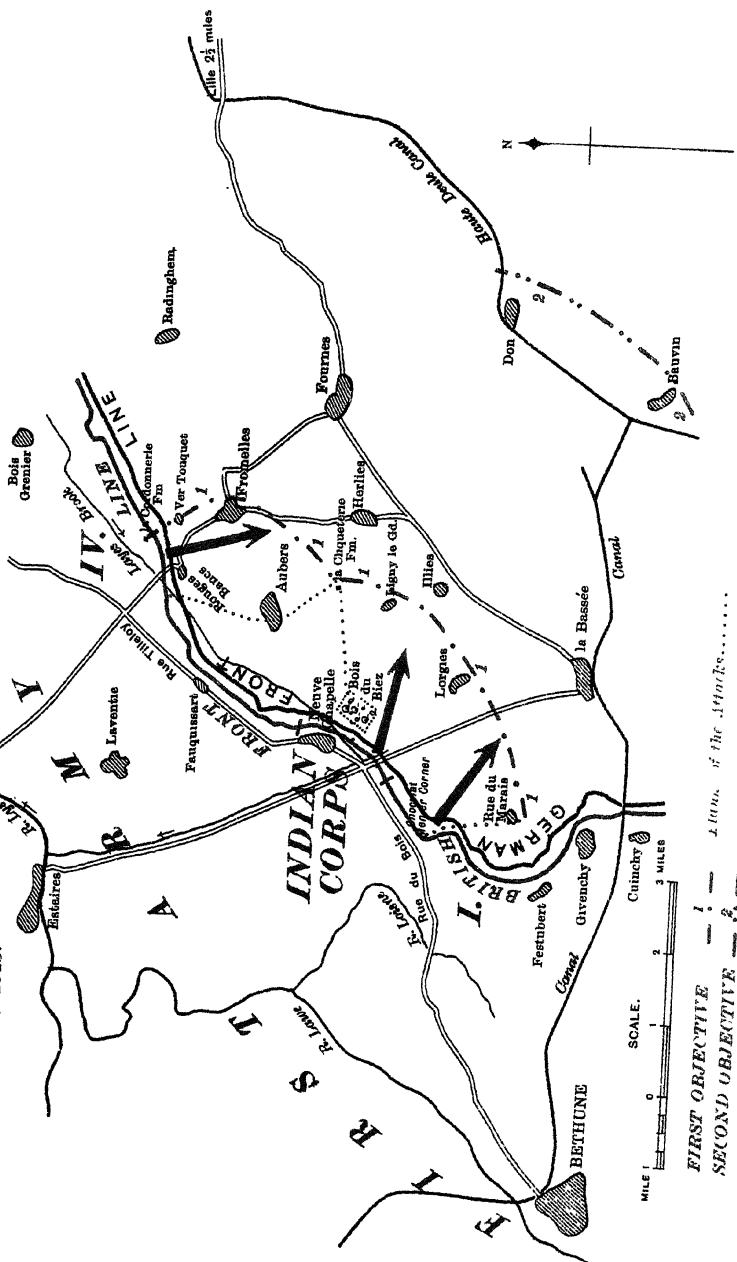
¹ Details of these attacks are given in Appendix 4.

² See "1915" Vol. I. p. 70.

³ He apparently counted on the I. and IV. Corps, of 3 divisions each, the Indian Corps, of 2, and the 50th (Northumbrian) and 51st (Highland) when they arrived.

FIRST ARMY OBJECTIVES
9TH MAY 1915.

SKETCH 3.



But Sir John French said that he desired to begin these two April attacks on the same day as the main attack of the French Tenth Army, after a preliminary bombardment of much the same duration as that at the battle of Neuve Chapelle. He asked that he might be told definitely, and as early as possible, the date on which the French Tenth Army would begin operations.

The battles at Ypres, although they involved, at least for a time, the French IX. Corps (18th, 152nd and 153rd Divisions) and the British 50th and Lahore Divisions, detailed for the Allied May offensive, did not induce General Joffre to make any change in his plans. Clearly, the best way to recover the initiative and relieve the pressure in the north, where the ground was unfavourable to the Allies, was to proceed with his carefully prepared offensive. The determination to do so was strengthened by the beginning Sketch 1. on the 1st May of the great Austro-German offensive from Gorlice-Tarnow, which in the course of the summer was to drive the Russians out of Galicia and Poland.

On the 2nd May the notification of the date of the May. French attack was sent to G.H.Q., General Foch then informing Sir John French that the main infantry attack of the French Tenth Army would be delivered on the 7th May. He asked whether he could count on the operations of the British First Army beginning on the day following, according to the original plan. To this question Sir John French replied in the affirmative.

His orders for the battle were issued from British Sketch 3. Advanced Headquarters at Hazebrouck on the 4th May.¹ The opening paragraph of them ran:—

“The First Army will take the offensive on 8th May. “Its mission is to break through the enemy’s line on its “front and gain the La Bassée—Lille road between La “Bassée and Fournes. Its further advance will be directed “on the line Bauvin—Don. The Cavalry Corps, Indian “Cavalry Corps, Canadian Division,² Highland [51st] “Division (less one brigade R.F.A.) and Northumbrian “[50th] Division² will be in general reserve at the disposal “of the Field-Marshal, Commanding-in-Chief, and will be “ready to move at two hours’ notice.”

¹ Appendix 5.

² Both the Canadian and 50th Divisions had by the 2nd May lost heavily at “Second Ypres”.

PREPARATIONS IN THE FIRST ARMY

April.
Map 2.
Sketch 4.

In the course of the month of April the First Army¹ was reorganized in view of the impending operations. The Indian Corps, on the north, took over 1,500 yards of the I. Corps front between the Orchard Redoubt (1,300 yards north of Chocolat Menier Corner) and Neuve Chapelle, and the 47th (London) Division² was put into the line to hold 6,000 yards of the southern part of I. Corps front, from Cuinchy to Chocolat Menier Corner. These reliefs enabled the I. Corps to assemble the 2nd Division³ in reserve behind the 1st Division, which was then concentrated in depth on its frontage of assault, 1,800 yards.

In the Indian Corps, on the left of the I. Corps, the Meerut Division, which was to carry out the assault, was assembled in depth on a frontage of 800 yards, side by side with the 1st Division. The remainder of the Indian Corps

¹ For Order of Battle see Appendix 2. The I. Corps consisted of the 1st, 2nd and 47th Divisions; IV. Corps of the 7th, 8th and 49th Divisions; Indian Corps of the Meerut, Lahore and 51st Divisions.

² The 2nd London Division (see Order of Battle, Appendix 2), on the 11th May re-named the 47th Division (Major-General C. St. L. Barter), was one of the Territorial divisions formed out of the old Volunteer Force in April 1908, under Lord Haldane's scheme of reorganization. It completed its concentration in France on the 20th March, and had then been sent to the I. Corps. Its original battalions were the 13th (Kensington), 14th (London Scottish), 15th (Civil Service Rifles), 16th (Queen's Westminster Rifles), forming the 4th Brigade; 17th (Poplar and Stepney), 18th (London Irish), 19th (St. Pancras) and 20th (Blackheath), forming the 5th Brigade; the 21st (1st Surrey Rifles), and the 22nd, 23rd and 24th (The Queen's), all with headquarters in South London, forming the 6th Brigade. In September 1914, however, the London Scottish had been sent to France, followed early in November by the Queen's Westminster and the Kensingtons, for service with Regular brigades. To fill the three vacant places in the 4th Brigade, the 6th, 7th and 8th Battalions had been brought in from the 1st London Division, nearly all the rest of whose infantry had already been sent overseas:—one whole brigade (1st-4th London) to Malta in September 1914 and thence to France in January 1915; three other battalions, 5th (London Rifle Brigade), 9th (Queen Victoria's Rifles) and 12th (Rangers) to France. The two remaining battalions, the 10th and 11th, went to Gallipoli with the 54th (East Anglian) Division in July 1915.

The divisional artillery consisted of 15-pdr. B.L. guns, with two 4-gun batteries of 5-inch howitzers, and a heavy battery of 4·7-inch guns, weapons much inferior to the 18-pdrs., 4·5-inch howitzers and 60-pdrs. of a Regular division. The 4·7-inch battery had been transferred to a heavy artillery group.

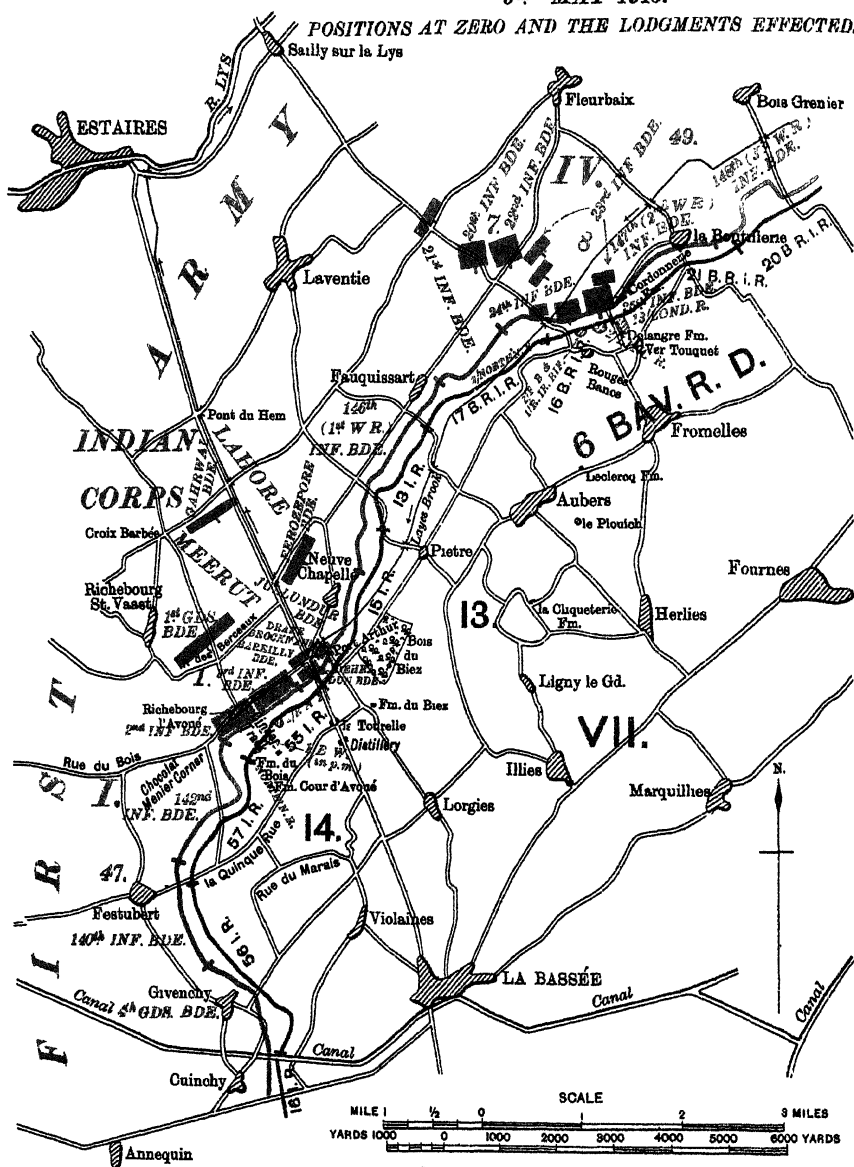
³ Owing to the importance of the sector between Givenchy and Cuinchy, astride the La Bassée canal, both as a pivot for the proposed offensive operations of the First Army, and as the point of junction with the French, the 4th (Guards) Brigade was retained as its garrison, the 5th London (renumbered 141st) Brigade, (47th Division) taking its place in the 2nd Division.

THE BATTLE OF AUBERS RIDGE

9TH MAY 1915.

POSITIONS AT ZERO AND THE LODGMENTS EFFECTED.

Sailly sur la Lys



Temporary Lodgments effected on 9th May.

front up to Neuve Chapelle (inclusive) was taken over by April. the Lahore Division.

A similar procedure had been adopted in the IV. Corps. Its frontage early in May covered from Neuve Chapelle (exclusive) northwards to Picantin, a distance of 5,000 yards. Here the 49th (West Riding) Division¹ assisted by some units of the 7th Division, took over the greater part of the corps front. The 8th Division was thus enabled to concentrate in depth on its assault frontage of 1,500 yards astride the Saily—Fromelles road, whilst the mass of the 7th Division was assembled in rear of the 8th Division.

These preliminary changes were delayed by the despatch northwards on the 24th April of the Lahore Division to assist the Second Army in the fighting in the Ypres Salient,² and by the withdrawal on the 28th April of two brigades and a proportion of the divisional troops of the 7th Division, into G.H.Q. reserve, in view of their being required at Ypres. Early in May, however, these troops—the Lahore Division much reduced in numbers by heavy fighting—were returned to the First Army, and the reliefs were then immediately carried out.

The final plan for the offensive of the First Army was explained by General Haig to his corps and divisional commanders at two conferences held in Bethune on the 27th April and the 6th May. It differed from preliminary instructions for supporting a French offensive on the Vimy plateau, issued by G.H.Q. on the 5th April, which directed the First Army to stage its main operation south of Neuve Chapelle, in that it contemplated attacks both south and north of that village. The first phase of the offensive was to consist of a simultaneous assault against the German front defences by the I., Indian and IV. Corps, to be followed at once by a rapid advance in order to gain a footing on Aubers ridge, three thousand yards beyond, before the Germans could re-establish their line. The I. and Indian Corps were to attack south of Neuve Chapelle side by side on a front of 2,400 yards between Chocolat Menier Corner and Neuve Chapelle (exclusive), securing the line Rue du Marais—

¹ The West Riding Division (Major-General T. S. Baldock) (Order of Battle, Appendix 2), afterwards known as the 49th Division, was formed in 1908 out of the Volunteer Forces then existing in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It consisted of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd West Riding Infantry Brigades, renamed the 146th, 147th and 148th Infantry Brigades soon after their arrival in France on 12th April 1915.

The divisional artillery, like that of the 47th, was armed with 15-pdr. B.L. guns and 5-inch howitzers.

² See "1915" Vol. I. pp. 267 and 281.

May. Lorgies—Ligny le Grand—La Cliqueterie Farm. The IV. Corps was to attack north of Neuve Chapelle on a frontage of 1,500 yards astride the Saily—Fromelles road towards Rouges Bancs and, spreading out on a front Aubers—Rouges Bancs as soon as its leading division had crossed the German front defences, it was to secure the line La Cliqueterie Farm—Fromelles—Rouges Bancs, its right joining up with the Indian Corps about La Cliqueterie Farm.

Thus the general idea for the first movement—like that carried out by the Germans and Austrians two and a half years later on a larger scale at Caporetto—was the forcing of a breach in the German defences at two points, 6,000 yards apart, followed by a convergent advance: that of the I. and Indian Corps eastwards, and that of the IV. Corps south-eastwards. General Haig pointed out that if the operation succeeded, the strength of the German force cut off in the area Neuve Chapelle—Aubers—Fauquissart would probably be some six or seven battalions and twelve to twenty guns. To deal with this force definite units were to be detailed from the inner flanks of the two corps concerned, the Indian and the IV. Corps, to hold localities—in particular, La Russie (buildings at the north-east corner of the Bois du Biez) and Aubers village—for the purpose of hemming in the Germans and meeting counter-attacks.

Sketch 3. The second phase of the offensive was to be the continuation of the advance eastwards from Aubers ridge towards Herlies and Illies and across the La Bassée—Lille road, to the line Bauvin—Don in the valley of the Haute Deule.

Maps 3, 4. The success of the offensive depended first and foremost on the capacity of the British artillery to break down the German front position and demoralize the defence, so as to prepare the way for the assaulting troops. The preliminary bombardment was to last forty minutes, of which the final ten minutes was to be intense. Each battery was allotted definite tasks according to a special artillery time table, similar to that for the battle of Neuve Chapelle, prepared by the commanders of the H.A.R. (Heavy Artillery Reserve) Groups and of the divisional artillery concerned.

The mass of divisional artillery of the First Army had been assembled opposite the sectors of assault. The 18-pdrs.¹

¹ The low trajectory of this gun at the wire-cutting ranges, 1500-2000 yards, and the flatness of the ground did not make it an ideal weapon for the purpose; and its shells passing low over young troops and transport horses at night were trying to their nerves.

and light batteries were detailed for cutting the wire and forming belts of fire immediately behind the German front position to prevent the arrival of German reinforcements; the field howitzers for demolishing the German parapet and any strong points in and near the German trenches. Two Groups H.A.R. consisting of heavy guns and howitzers, were allotted by G.H.Q. to the First Army for the battle, and they were given the task of fighting the German batteries and firing on farms, houses and other strong points that were out of effective range of the divisional artillery.¹

Preparations were to be made for sending forward artillery as soon as possible to follow up the advancing infantry. The teams of certain specified artillery brigades in each division were to be brought up close to the guns in readiness for an advance at short notice. Certain heavy batteries were also to be prepared to go forward on to Aubers ridge as soon as practicable.

In view of the experience of Neuve Chapelle—where the infantry had been held up by various strong points on which the artillery could not concentrate either with sufficient rapidity or accuracy—"infantry artillery" was to be attached to infantry brigades for close support of the assault. It was to consist of batteries of trench mortars—

¹ The allotment of guns and howitzers to Armies on the 9th May was as follows :

	First Army.	Second Army.	III. Corps (under G.H.Q.).	Cav. Corps (G.H.Q.).	In Reserve and G.H.Q.	Total.
2·75-inch	12	2	4			18
13-pdr.	78	18		12	3 }	126
13-pdr. A.A.	6	7	2			
15-pdr. B.L.C. (obsolete)	84	72	36		12	204
15-pdr. Q.F.				4		4
18-pdr.	276	246	102		}	625
18-pdr. A.A.		1				
4·5-inch howitzer	60	36	20			116
4·7-inch guns (obsolete)	28	44	8			80
60-pdr.	20	8				28
5-inch howitzer (obsolete)	20	16	4		8	48
6-inch howitzer } old, superseded	36	4				40
6-inch B.L.C. } later by more powerful marks	4		4			8
9·2-inch howitzer	10	2				12
15-inch howitzer	3					3
75-mm. (Belgian)		24				24

That is the First Army had 516 field and light guns and howitzers and 121 heavies. The French Tenth Army alongside it had 780 field and 179 light (3·7 and 5·8-cm.) guns and howitzers and 293 heavies. See Note I. Chapter II.

May. bomb guns as they were called at the time—and 8-pdr. Hotchkiss or mountain guns, carried on lorries or armoured cars.

The 1st Wing Royal Flying Corps, attached to the First Army, was directed to send up defensive patrols for four days previous to the battle to prevent the enemy from obtaining information by air reconnaissance. During the fighting it was to provide machines, equipped with wireless telegraphy, for artillery observation and for local reconnaissance work near the battle front. So that the progress of the attack could be followed closely, three machines were detailed, one always to be in the air, to report when certain lines were captured. These lines were to be marked on the ground by white linen strips, 7 feet by 2 feet, carried by the infantry.¹ In order to impede the movement of German supplies and reserves, the R.F.C. was to bomb the villages of Illies, Herlies, Fournes and Marquillies (1 mile east of Illies), all believed to be German rest billets, and also the railway bridge and the road bridge over the canal at Don (5½ miles north-east of La Bassée). Special bombing raids were to be made by the Headquarters Wing of the Royal Flying Corps on the railway junctions south-east and north of Lille, on the railway stations at Seclin, Tournai (15 miles east of Lille) and Roubaix (8 miles north-east of Lille), and by the 1st Wing on the headquarters of German higher commanders.²

Although the French and British offensives were to be in co-operation, the methods adopted in each to solve the problem of breaking through the German front defences were essentially different. The experience gained by the French during the winter fighting in Champagne and in Alsace had led them to abandon the short bombardment; they now considered it necessary to prepare the German position for assault by gun fire lasting four days, chiefly of heavy artillery. This fire was to be "slow, methodical, and prolonged, with the object of destroying the enemy's morale, "disorganizing his defensive measures and breaking up "his obstacles and strong points." By this method our Ally waived the advantage of surprise, trusting instead to weight of metal. In the same way the infantry advance itself was to be made by methodical stages, each day's

¹ Unfortunately, the lines in question were never reached, and although 42 messages and calls were sent down, they were of little value, as the observers had great difficulty in distinguishing friend from foe.

² No direct hits appear to have been made on these objectives.

objective being limited to a certain definite line. Thus in May, the case of the main French attack, the line of Vimy ridge, entailing an advance of 5,000 yards, was allotted as the objective of the first day.

The British commanders, on the other hand, with the experience of Neuve Chapelle behind them, decided to repeat the procedure adopted for the early stages of that battle. Partly by deliberate choice, and partly by force of circumstances owing to the shortage of heavy artillery and ammunition, they again arranged for a short and intense bombardment of only forty minutes, thereby hoping to retain for the infantry assault all the advantages of surprise. For the subsequent advance no definite objective for each day was given, although many regimental officers would have preferred a limited one with "systematic exploitation" after the first assault. The attacking divisions were ordered to press forward as rapidly as possible from objective to objective to the line of the Haute Deule canal, beyond Aubers ridge, a distance of six miles. The course of the battle was thus left to a great extent in the hands of the local commanders.

For several nights preceding the offensive there had been a great amount of preparatory work:—the reclamation of disused trenches in No Man's Land, as jumping-off places for the assaulting lines; the construction of blocks of "assembly trenches" a few hundred yards behind the front parapet; the improvement of communication trenches; the cutting of steps in the front breastworks to enable the infantry to pass over more rapidly; and the provision of a number of light foot-bridges to be carried forward by battalions for crossing the German trenches, the Layes brook, and other dykes and obstacles that might hold up the advance. Bridges also, in two longitudinal parts, were made to be carried on the limbers, so that the artillery could push on independent of the roads. The maps issued to the troops gave the position of the main enemy trenches with accuracy, but not that of all the dykes; for the air photographs showed such a confusion of lines that it was difficult to plot from them. Further preparations included the collection near the British front breastworks of reserves of ammunition (50 rounds S.A.A. per man), R.E. stores, one day's ration (packed in sandbags) and a number of canvas bags for carrying up drinking water to the front troops during the advance.

In spite of excellent ground observation over the British

May. area from Aubers ridge, the preparations and preliminaries seem to have escaped enemy notice until the 8th May. Nor did air observation disclose anything; for aeroplane photography was still in its infancy, and did not provide in 1915 the detailed evidence of the mounting of an attack—disclosing even little piles of shells—that it did in 1918.

Sketch 4. General Haig's operation orders for the assault were issued on 6th May,¹ in accordance with the plan and details already settled at the previous conferences. In the morning, however, heavy rain fell and continued throughout the day and early part of the night, followed on the morning of the 7th by a dense mist, so thick that at times visibility was limited to fifty yards. These two days of rain and mist upset the French programme. The four days' bombardment had been begun on the 3rd, and the main infantry assault was to follow on the morning of the 7th. But the rain on the 6th had led to the postponement of the main attack till the 8th; and on the afternoon of the 7th, since the thick mist meant the loss of another day in the bombardment programme, a conference was held at St. Pol, Tenth Army headquarters. After a consultation with General Foch, General d'Urbal decided to postpone the main attack for another twenty-four hours, till the morning of the 9th. In view of a request from Sir John French that the attack might be delivered as early as possible in order to relieve the situation in the Ypres Salient, it was further decided that the entire offensive, that is the main French attack, the attacks on the flanks and the attack by the British First Army, should be delivered simultaneously, and not consecutively as had been previously intended.

The decision to postpone the assault for twenty-four hours, notified both from British G.H.Q. and, by personal letter from General d'Urbal, reached Merville, First Army Advanced Headquarters, at 5 P.M. on the 7th May. General Haig at once sent orders to stop the movement of the assaulting brigades to their assembly trenches, which was timed to commence at 6 P.M. in readiness for the assault early next morning.

During the night of the 7th/8th the mist cleared, and on the 8th visibility was good, enabling the French bombardment to be continued. That evening the final preparations were made both on the French and British fronts, and by

¹ Appendix 6.

12 midnight all units were in position ready for the assault May. next morning.¹

THE ALTERED PROBLEM

The confidence with which the new battle was undertaken on the British side was due in great measure to the success of the early stages of the battle of Neuve Chapelle and the ease with which the German front defences had been overrun. In a memorandum issued by G.H.Q. on 4th April 1915, the outstanding lesson of the battle of Neuve Chapelle was, with every justification, stated to be, that "by means of careful preparation as regards details "and thorough previous registration of the enemy's trenches "by our artillery, it appears that a sector of the enemy's "front line defence can be captured with comparatively "little loss." This confidence was not confined to the higher leaders, but was generally reflected in the feelings of the troops, who, as reported at the time, went over the top in the highest spirits and in all cases with the determination to win. As some officers put it, "this should be "Neuve Chapelle over again, and much more successful "because we have learnt its lessons and shall know what "to avoid this time." Some survivors of the 8th Division, remembering the loss of 218 officers and 4,687 other ranks, alone felt doubtful.

But the Germans had also learnt their lesson, and had taken immediate steps to prevent a recurrence of the local crisis which had been brought about on the 10th March by the insufficiency of their defences on the British front. They began by increasing their trench garrison opposite the First Army front from two to three divisions; and, according to their own account, during the eight weeks' respite given to them they devoted a prodigious amount of energy to strengthening their positions in every possible way.²

The problem of breaking through the enemy position had therefore become a very different proposition to that which had confronted the First Army at Neuve Chapelle. Instead of light field defences, there were now fortifications of a semi-permanent character which required heavy high-explosive shell to breach them. But the altered conditions,

¹ In the course of the afternoon the news arrived of the sinking off the Irish coast on the 7th May of the Atlantic liner "Lusitania," with the majority of its 2,000 passengers, by a German submarine.

² See Note I. at end of Chapter for details.

May. although suspected, were not fully known, despite incessant efforts to get full information of the enemy's defences by uninterrupted watching and great activity in scouting.

The duration and general procedure of the bombardment were little different to the arrangements made at Neuve Chapelle. In spite of the doubled or trebled strength of the German defences, the weight of metal per yard of front to be used to demolish them was little, if any, greater. On the front of the 1st Division, considered as the main attacking force, there were to be, for example, 46 howitzers for demolishing the German front parapets and trenches on a frontage of fifteen hundred yards; at Neuve Chapelle there had been 60 howitzers for an attack frontage of two thousand yards. In view of the fighting in progress at Ypres, G.H.Q. could provide no more artillery, although representations were made by the First Army.

NOTE I

THE GERMAN PREPARATIONS TO MEET A RENEWED ATTACK

Maps 1, 2. After the battle of Neuve Chapelle the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, having rested a few days behind Aubers ridge, on the 19th-20th March, took over with its four regiments the right sector (8,000 yards) of the front of the *13th Division*, from Bois Grenier to Fauquissart. This enabled the *13th* and *14th Divisions* not only to occupy the line more securely, but to free additional men for working parties, without which the defences themselves could not have been improved so rapidly as was the case. These two divisions, both of which had been reduced to three regiments prior to the battle of Neuve Chapelle, were now redistributed, the *13th* on a front opposite Fauquissart—Chocolat Menier Corner (7,000 yards), and the *14th* from that Corner to Cuinchy (7,000 yards). By this re-grouping, each regiment now held approximately 2,000 yards of front instead of 3,000 yards as prior to the battle of Neuve Chapelle.

The only reserves of the German *Sixth Army* behind the battle sector were two divisions, neither of which could be expected to reach Aubers ridge within twenty-four hours.¹

As regards the improvement of the defences, owing to the high water-level, which was only two to three feet below the surface, the front trenches themselves were necessarily shallow, and the chief protection therefore was given by the breastwork parapet and the breastwork parados.² These, and the traverses, were built almost entirely with sandbags, each course being supported and strengthened by stretches of large-mesh wire. The width of the parapet was doubled or trebled to measure fifteen to twenty feet across and heightened to six or seven feet. It was then considered to be proof

¹ See Note II. Chapter II.

² A parados is a parapet which protects the backs of the defenders.

against the shell of all but the heaviest calibre armament on the British front. The wire entanglement which in combination with the machine guns made the position so formidable, had been increased in breadth, and in many places remade with stouter wire. Further, wire had been erected in the excavations in front of the parapet—dug to obtain earth to build the parapet—which was not visible from the British trenches.

The dug-outs, constructed every few yards in both the parapet and the parados, consisted of large wooden boxes placed on the ground level, and covered with sandbags to the height of the parapet and parados. Each of these wooden structures was sufficient to give cover to two men. Every twenty yards or so emplacements for machine guns had been built, consisting of large V-shaped wooden boxes, the point of the V at the outer side of the breastwork, and from these the machine guns, firing through steel-rail loopholes near the ground level, were able to sweep the front with grazing effect. It was maintained that only a direct hit by a howitzer shell close to the machine-gun loophole itself could put the gun out of action. Boxes let into the sides of the traverses contained the reserves of ammunition and hand-grenades.

In each of the regimental sectors (2,000 yards), one or more strong points had been built in salients, or bends, of the front line, and from them machine guns, protected as described above, could enfilade lines of enemy infantry advancing against the main position.

The trench for the supports, 200 to 300 yards in rear of the front line, had also been reconstructed, and could be used if necessary as a fire position. It was wired, with gaps for the communication trenches and their parapets; and, though not so strongly built as the front line, offered sufficient protection to ensure that determined men could check any part of an infantry advance that might succeed in passing the front line.

Special attention had also been given to the communication trenches, which at the time of the battle of Neuve Chapelle had been in a very unfinished condition. There was now in every regimental sector an "Up" and a "Down" communication trench between the front position and some central point, a thousand yards or so in rear. These communication trenches had fire steps on both sides so that they could be used for defence, and in many places were hidden from view by means of canvas screens, or blinded, that is covered by hurdles or other roofing, an arrangement that was to prove of considerable value in concealing the arrival of reinforcements and the carrying up of material in the subsequent fighting.

Early in May all this work was far advanced, and the fact of its completion in so short a time is made the subject of special mention in the histories of some of the German regiments concerned. In addition to the companies in the front and support lines who worked almost continuously in reliefs, the companies in rest billets¹ were frequently sent up for night work on the front defences. Further assistance was given by working parties specially detailed from the recruit depots at Wavrin and Lille, and other training centres behind the line.²

¹ At this period each company had six days in the front trench, two in support, and four in rest billets.

² "K.B. Res. Regt. No. 17." Statements of German prisoners taken on and after 9th May 1915.

NOTE II

FRENCH OPERATIONS ELSEWHERE THAN IN ARTOIS
IN THE SPRING OF 1915

The French undertook in 1915 numerous secondary operations in addition to the principal offensives in Artois and Champagne¹ referred to in this volume. As a rule, they were of local interest only, and they are therefore of small importance in the general picture.

During February and March there was heavy fighting for the possession of Hartmannswillerkopf (near the German frontier in Alsace, 20 miles N.E. by N. of Belfort), for the crests of Les Eparges (northern end of the western front of the St. Mihiel salient) and the plateau of Vauquois (15 miles west by north of Verdun).

On the 14th March, when the attacks in Champagne were coming to an end, General Joffre announced his intention of undertaking offensive operations in the area of the Group of the Armies of the East. The principal of these was to be in Woevre, for the definite reduction of the St. Mihiel salient by a simultaneous surprise attack on both faces by three corps, with subsidiary attacks nearby on either flank. The operations were to be stopped at the end of a few days if there seemed no chance of obtaining a complete success. The offensive was begun on the 5th April in very bad weather, which transformed the ground into a morass, and failed. It was renewed on the 9th, but again failed, and was brought to an end on the 14th.²

¹ The Winter Battle in Champagne had ended officially on the 17th March. The Second Battle of Champagne, simultaneous with the battle of Loos, began on the 25th September, and will be referred to later.

² For the continuation of the French minor operations see Note I. Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF AUBERS RIDGE, 9TH MAY 1915

THE BATTLE

(Maps 2, 3, 4 ; Sketches 4, 5)

THE ATTACK AT RUE DU BOIS (THE RIGHT ATTACK). THE FIRST ASSAULT BY THE I. AND INDIAN CORPS

AFTER a warm starlight night, Sunday morning, the 9th May, 9 May.
broke fine and clear, with a fresh and steady breeze from the north-east. At sunrise (4.6 A.M.) the whole battle zone Maps 2,
appeared silent and deserted except for occasional artillery 3.
ranging shots. The front trenches and breastworks in the Sketch 4.
sectors of attack were, however, already crowded with the
troops of the assaulting battalions, and the reserve and
communication trenches packed with those of the sup-
porting units. During the night, to supplement the steps
already cut in the parapet, short ladders had been set up
to enable the troops to mount the breastworks quickly ;
and passages had been made through the wire, and light
bridges placed across any dykes immediately in front that
might delay the advance.

At 5 A.M. the silence of the early hours was roughly
broken by the beginning of the preliminary bombardment,
and a mass of shell from some six hundred guns sped
through the air towards the German lines.

On the front of the I. Corps, the artillery for the bom-
bardment of the German front defences was disposed under
the direction of Br.-General E. A. Fanshawe, commanding
the 1st Division artillery.¹ The 96 wire-cutting guns²

¹ The Artillery Adviser of the I. Corps, Br.-General R. A. K. Montgomery, like other corps artillery generals at the time, had no executive authority.

² 66 18-pdr. guns (XXV., XXVI., XXXIX. and XLI. Brigades R.F.A.).

12 15-pdr. guns (V. London Brigade R.F.A.).

18 13-pdr. guns (N, V and X Batteries R.H.A.).

9 May. were placed along the line of the Rue des Berceaux, at an average range of 1,600 yards from the German entanglement. The howitzers, 46 in all,¹ for breaking down the German parapet were in position north and south of Richebourg St. Vaast, some thousand yards behind the wire-cutting guns.

On the front of the Indian Corps, the bombardment was carried out by the artillery of the Meerut and Lahore Divisions, under Br.-General F. E. Johnson, the G.O.C. R.A. of the latter, supported by a portion of the guns of No. 1 Group Heavy Artillery Reserve.² The wire was to be cut by the 18-pdr. guns of the Meerut Division at an approximate range of two thousand yards. The German parapet on the 800-yards sector of assault, astride the La Bassée road, was to be demolished by 26 howitzers.³ The three R.F.A. brigades of the Lahore Division, in position west of Neuve Chapelle, were to form a barrage behind the sector of the German front north of the Lorgies road, in order to prevent the Germans there from either getting away or interfering with the advance of the Meerut Division. The total number, therefore, of howitzers employed to make ripe for assault the 2,400 yards of parapet in front of the I. and Indian Corps was 72, that is 3 per hundred yards; at Riga in 1917 for a similar short sharp bombardment on a 10-kilometre front, the Germans used 546 howitzers and heavy trench mortars, that is 5 per hundred yards.⁴

The bombardment of various farms, houses and other defended localities in the sector of attack outside the range of the divisional artillery, was carried out by the heavy howitzers of No. 1 Group H.A.R., assembled between Vieille Chapelle (4 miles west of Neuve Chapelle) and Rue du Bois. The heavy guns of No. 1 Group and the three French heavy batteries about Annequin, south of the La Bassée canal, were used principally for counter-battery

¹ 16 6-inch howitzers (XII. and XIV. Brigades R.G.A.);

16 5-inch " (IV. West Riding and VIII. London Brigades);

14 4.5-inch " (XLIV. Brigade R.F.A., less two sections).

² No. 1 Group H.A.R., under Br.-General G. McK. Franks, consisted of:—
R.M.A. (one 15-inch howitzer);
10th Siege Battery (four 9.2-inch howitzers);
18th " (Right Section only—two 9.2-inch howitzers);
24th Heavy Battery (four 60-pdr. guns);
48th " { " " " };
1st Canadian Heavy Battery { " " " }.

³ 18 4.5-inch howitzers (XLIII. Brigade R.F.A.).

⁴ 8 6-inch howitzers (VI. Brigade R.G.A.).

⁵ Bruchmüller's "Die Artillerie beim Angriff im Stellungskrieg," p 57.

work, those of No. 1 Group against the area between 9 May. Violaines and Ligny le Grand, and the French batteries against the area between the La Bassée canal and Violaines.¹ Although the approximate position of the enemy gun emplacements had been fixed by frequent aeroplane reconnaissances during the previous weeks, the location of the actual guns in action was rendered most difficult by the fact that the forward observation officers could see very little, owing to the flatness of the country and the trees and pollard willows, now in full leaf, that lined most of the dykes. This cover not only concealed the fall of the shell, but enabled the enemy batteries to change position unseen. For counter-battery work therefore the British artillery commanders depended for their information as to targets mainly on messages from aeroplanes, three of which, fitted with wireless apparatus, were attached to No. 1 and four to No. 2 Group H.A.R. ; and on messages from headquarters of infantry divisions stating the general direction from which damaging hostile fire was being received.²

At 5.30 A.M. the British bombardment became intense on the whole front, and the wire-cutting guns, now changing from shrapnel to H.E. shell, added their fire to that of the howitzers against the German parapet. At 5.40 A.M. the guns lifted 600 yards, to about the line of the La Quinque Rue, and the infantry moved to the attack.

On the front of the I. Corps³ the assault was delivered Map 2. by the 1st Division (Major-General R. C. B. Haking), the 2nd Division (Major-General H. S. Horne) moving up behind it to within three miles of the front line. The

¹ The German batteries that were in a position to check at the outset the assaulting infantry of the I. and Indian Corps were the eight heavy batteries of the German VII. Corps artillery on the general line Violaines—Lorgies—Ligny le Grand, and those field batteries of the 13th and 14th Divisions north of the La Bassée canal, that is, six batteries of the 14th Divisional artillery about Canteleux (a mile west of La Bassée), the Rue du Marais and Lorgies, and nine batteries of the 13th Divisional artillery in the area Lorgies, La Tourelle, Ligny le Petit, Illies.

² Sound ranging, which was first taken up by the French, was brought to the notice of G.H.Q. in March 1915 ; but the two artillery experts sent to report on it did not consider it worth pursuing. The proposal to organize an experimental sound ranging section, with a "Bull-Weiss installation," was made to the War Office on the 28th August 1915, and approved on the 12th September. The first experimental set was delivered by Mr. Bull in October 1915.

An elementary system of flash spotting appears to have been evolved in several divisions before the end of 1914. The first organized unit for battery fixing was the Artillery Survey Detachment, formed in the Third Army in October 1915.

³ The operation orders of the I. Corps and 1st Division are given in Appendices 7 & 8.

9 May. infantry of the 47th (2nd London) Division (Major-General C. St. L. Barter), holding the front south of the attack, was warned to be prepared to take over certain localities from the 1st Division as soon as they were captured, and occupy Rue d'Ouvert (1 mile east of Festubert) if the enemy showed signs of weakening. Keeping the 1st (Guards) Brigade in reserve, General Haking had during the night brought the 2nd and 3rd Brigades¹ into the assembly position behind breastworks, previously prepared, in rear of the front line.² At 5.30 A.M., as soon as the artillery bombardment entered its intense phase, the first line battalions of both brigades sent their leading companies over the top into No Man's Land—here varying in width from five hundred yards on the right to a hundred on the left, and intersected by wide ditches full of water—to establish themselves about eighty yards from the German parapet. It had been hoped to carry out this advance unmolested, and no provision was made for covering rifle fire in accordance with pre-war teaching; but the Germans, who actually showed their heads above the parapet whilst the bombardment was going on, observed every movement. Thus as soon as the leading waves left the shelter of the trenches heavy machine-gun fire was opened on them. Many men fell dead on the ladders and on the parapet, but the others doubled forward, and a general line was formed

¹ 2nd Brigade (Br.-General G. H. Thesiger) :

front line, 1/Northamptonshire (Lieut.-Colonel L. G. W. Dobbin) and 2/R. Sussex (Lieut.-Colonel E. W. B. Green), each on 350 yards front ;

in support, 2/K.R.R.C. (Major L. F. Philips) and 1/5th R. Sussex (Lieut.-Colonel F. G. Langham) ;

in reserve in rear of the Rue du Bois, 1/Loyal N. Lancashire (Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Sanderson), 1/9th King's (Major T. J. Bolland, who was killed on this day).

3rd Brigade (Br.-General H. R. Davies) :

front line, 2/R. Munster Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel V. G. H. Rickard) and 2/Welch (Lieut.-Colonel A. G. Prothero) ;

in second line, 1/4th R. Welch Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel F. C. France Hayhurst) ;

in reserve, 1/Gloucestershire (Lieut.-Colonel A. W. Pagan) and 1/South Wales Borderers (Lieut.-Colonel A. J. Reddie).

² 1st Division headquarters and those of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades were in houses, specially strengthened with sandbags, in the Rue du Bois, about three hundred yards behind the front line. The commanders were able to observe as much as smoke and dust permitted, through loopholes ; the proximity of the headquarters to each other greatly facilitated command and exchange of news.

General Fanshawe, directing the artillery on the I. Corps front, was with General Haking at 1st Division headquarters most of the day ; the desired changes in the artillery programme could therefore be carried out with the minimum of delay.

FIRST ASSAULT OF I. AND INDIAN CORPS 21

in No Man's Land, not far short of the intended one. The 9 May. supporting battalions also made some headway.¹

The Indian Corps was not so fortunate. The assault was to be delivered by the Meerut Division (Lieut.-General Sir C. A. Anderson) on an 800-yards front south of the Port Arthur salient, the Lahore Division (Major-General H. D'U. Keary), just returned from Ypres, holding the line on its left. The leading waves of the Dehra Dun Brigade² (Br.-General C. W. Jacob), which had two battalions of the Garhwal Brigade with some trench mortars³ in rear of its left, moved forward at the same time as the 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 1st Division. But here also there was no covering rifle fire, and the troops found it impossible to advance more than a few yards from the front parapet. Nevertheless, the men who were to form the later waves pressed on. Some, getting out of the crowded trenches, tried to advance over the open, but the fire was too much for them and they were driven to seek cover again, so that even the front trench systems were quickly blocked with dead and wounded.

Notwithstanding this ominous commencement, when, ten minutes later at 5.40 A.M., the guns lifted, the leading waves of all three brigades rose and rushed towards the German defences. The charge was met by a devastating fire of machine guns⁴ and rifles, accurate and incessant; and there was nothing to keep it down. It was evident that for the most part the bombardment had completely failed in its primary task, the neutralization of the enemy's fire power. Adequate lanes had not been cut in the wire and it still formed a continuous obstacle; and very few gaps had been made in the German 6-feet high breastworks. For most of the batteries it was the first experience in wire cutting, and as only thirty minutes had been allowed, the results were not unnaturally incomplete. Then, when the

¹ There appear to have been approximately 3 companies of the 57th Regiment, 9 companies of the 55th, and 2 of the 15th, of which 4 were in support, with 22 machine guns on the front of attack of the three brigades of the I. and Indian Corps.—“Regt. No. 55.”

² The 2/2nd Gurkhas (Major E. R. P. Boileau), 1/4th Seaforth Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel T. W. Cuthbert) and 1/Seaforth Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel A. B. Ritchie) in front line.

³ This detachment, under Lieut.-Colonel D. H. Drake-Brockman, was intended in due course to pass through the Dehra Dun Brigade, wheel to the left, advance through the Bois du Biez, and secure its northern edge and the houses near.

⁴ Mainly cross fire: machine guns were concealed not only in the parapet itself, but in screened emplacements, in front of the German wire, to which the Germans crawled when the attack began.

9 May. time came for the infantry advance, the various artillery "lifts" were too quick—the first lift was made before the assaulters were within fifty yards of the Germans—with the consequence that the covering gun fire got clean ahead of the troops. As all the telephone lines back from the front line had been cut and no other means of communication had been arranged, it was impossible to correct this.¹

In spite of inadequate artillery support and of continuous losses—most of the officers fell, among them Lieut.-Colonel Rickard of the Munsters—the assaulting battalions pressed on.

In the 1st Division they reached the edge of the wire before they were checked. The few gaps in it were raked with fire, but through them a party of about twenty of the Northamptonshire and the right company, about a hundred strong, of the Munsters penetrated to the parapet. The Northamptonshire, who entered the trench through a small breach were, according to German account, dealt with by bayonet and hand-grenade. Of the Munsters, fifty crossed the parapet, on which one stood and waved a green flag; then they, too, disappeared, never to return.² Others of the attackers managed to use their rifles over the German parapet; some who were stopped by the wire lay down seeking what cover they could; a few tried to get back to the British line: but they and the leading companies of the supporting battalions, the 2/K.R.R.C. and 1/5th Sussex, which now crossed the British breastwork, merely fell victims to German machine-gun fire.

In the Meerut Division, directly the Highlanders and Gurkhas tried to advance, whole lines were seen to fall as the machine guns traversed the front, and the battalions could do no more than establish a line about half-way across No Man's Land.

At 6.5 A.M. Br.-General Davies (3rd Brigade) asked for a further fifteen minutes' bombardment, but Br.-General Thesiger (2nd Brigade) did not consider this sufficient. General Haking therefore decided to make a fresh effort after a renewed bombardment from 6.15 to 7 A.M., and word was passed to the Meerut Division which agreed to conform.

The artillery, unfortunately, was unable to locate the

¹ A common German criticism on the fighting at Aubers, and in the subsequent action at Festubert which followed, is that the British artillery preparation was insufficient (*e.g.* Hierl, iii., p. 29).

² The survivors went on beyond the trench, but were held up by a broad dyke, and mostly killed by the second British bombardment.

exact position of the German machine-gun loopholes at the base of the breastwork.¹ As it required a direct hit from an H.E. shell close to the loophole to put a gun out of action, practically all of them remained intact. Wire cutting whilst large numbers of wounded lay in front of the German parapet could only be continued with great circumspection. The way for the second attempt, therefore, was no better prepared than the first, and owing to lack of time for re-organization, heavy casualties, and the congested state of the trenches, consisted of a series of individual efforts. It failed completely, the Germans firing as strongly as ever.

At 7.20 A.M. General Haking in reporting the deadlock to the I. Corps, asked if he should employ the 1st (Guards) Brigade, but was instructed not to do so without further orders. In reply to a question, he gave it as his opinion that even if the whole 2nd Division were put in, it would not, in the situation, be successful.

During the short period that the two brigades of the 1st Division had been engaged, the six battalions which crossed the British parapet had lost 85 officers and 2,135 men, about sixty per cent. of their strength, and the Dehra Dun Brigade 37 officers and 856 men.²

It was impossible to reinforce or bring back the survivors of the assaulting troops; for any movement in No Man's Land, even of an individual, at once attracted the enemy's fire; and, although a special bombardment was ordered to cover the withdrawal, only a few of the men who had crossed the parapet were able to get back during daylight, the rest remaining out, protected to some extent by the slightly convex surface of the fields.

In spite of the failure of both attacks of the Meerut Division, Lieut.-General Anderson ordered a further

¹ One battery commander, who spent the whole day in the front trenches, reported that he failed to discover the position of a single machine gun.

² The principal losses in the battalions were :—

	Officers.	Other ranks.
1/Northamptonshire	17	543
2/Sussex	14	537
2/K.R.R.C.	11	240
1/5th Sussex	11	191
2/R. Munster Fus.	19	379
2/Welch	11	245
1/Seaforths	21	488
1/4th Seaforths	3	172

A company of the 6th Jats connecting the 1st and Meerut Divisions lost both its British officers and 52 other ranks.

9 May. bombardment at 7.45 A.M. for forty minutes—prolonged subsequently for another twenty minutes—of the right and centre sectors of attack. Its immediate result was to induce the German artillery, which until now had made little reply in that part of the field, to open heavy fire on the British breastworks and ground behind them, causing a number of casualties in the units of the second line of the Dehra Dun Brigade, in Drake-Brockman's detachment, and in the Bareilly Brigade which was coming up. It served no other purpose; for shortly after General Anderson had directed the prolongation of the bombardment he heard from the 1st Division that it would require two hours to reorganize before it could continue operations, and he ordered the Meerut Division to stay any further attack. Its leading battalions therefore remained lying out in No Man's Land, pinned to the ground, like those of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades; whilst, as if to prevent their relief and support, from about 9.30 A.M. to 10.30 A.M., ignoring counter-battery fire, the German artillery, field and heavy, proceeded systematically to bombard the British front and support trenches and the buildings in rear.

THE SECOND ASSAULT BY THE I. AND INDIAN CORPS

Map 2. By 8 A.M., reports of the small progress made reached
 Sketch General Haig, who throughout the day was kept informed
 4. by his liaison officers, as well as by corps agencies; but these reports did not bring out how completely the original attacks had failed, or how heavy had been the losses. He therefore felt inclined to repeat the whole operation. Enquiries through I. Corps headquarters brought a reply from General Haking that if the wire was cut by deliberate fire and more of the enemy's machine guns knocked out, the assault could be delivered again after midday. Being informed that the French were making splendid progress, the G.O.C. First Army ordered the two assaulting divisions to be reorganized and to start operations again from a new zero, which was fixed at 12 noon. He then motored to Lestrem, Indian Corps headquarters,¹ and learnt from General Willcocks that, owing to the heavy losses of the Dehra Dun Brigade, it would be unable to renew the assault; that the Bareilly Brigade would have to take its place;

¹ When Sir D. Haig visited his subordinates during a battle he left his Chief General Staff Officer Br.-General R. H. K. Butler in charge of his headquarters.

and that the relief would take some hours to arrange. 9 May. Thereupon he postponed zero hour to 2.40 P.M. The artillery time-table was to be a repetition of that carried out in the first assault and therefore was to begin at 2 P.M. General Haig then visited I. Corps headquarters near Essars and informed General Monro of the alteration of time: he directed that all available 18-pdr. H.E. shell should be used against the German parapet in addition to the fire of the howitzers.

On receipt of his fresh instructions, General Haking ordered the 2nd and 3rd Brigades to send their supporting battalions to the front line preparatory to another assault; and, with corps permission, the 1st (Guards) Brigade to furnish two battalions—1/Black Watch and 1/Cameron Highlanders were detailed—to take part on the left of the 3rd Brigade.

These reliefs, and that of the Dehra Dun Brigade by the Bareilly Brigade, carried out in broad daylight, were attended by much confusion and heavy losses. The movements were noticed almost at once by the German artillery observers, and continuous shell fire was kept up throughout the morning on the British front breastworks and communication trenches, especially on the front of the Indian Corps. The British counter-batteries were by no means able to silence the fire, owing in a great measure to the difficulties of observation to which reference has already been made. At 11.20 A.M. Br.-General W. M. Southey, commanding the Bareilly Brigade, informed the Meerut Division that, owing to the condition of the trenches, which were considerably knocked about and still congested with dead and wounded, his battalions could not be formed up ready for the assault till 4 P.M. General Haig therefore again postponed zero hour for both the 1st and Meerut Divisions from 2.40 P.M. to 4 P.M.

Throughout the morning the divisional artillery of the I. and Indian Corps kept up a steady and deliberate fire on the German front and support lines, and on the communication trenches, to prevent repairs to the parapet and the forward movement of reinforcements which was reported from time to time by Flying Corps and artillery observers.¹

¹ The losses of the *55th Regiment*, some four hundred, in the early fighting were made good at once by three supporting companies; thus the strength of the troops holding the front defences in the afternoon was actually greater than in the morning. The reinforcements seen were three companies moving up from rest billets to take the place of those in support.

9 May. Early in the afternoon the organization of the 1st Division for the second assault had to be changed. At 12.15 P.M. Br.-General Thesiger informed General Haking that, in view of the losses of four battalions of the 2nd Brigade, he did not consider it in a fit state to renew the assault. The 1st (Guards) Brigade (Br.-General H. C. Lowther) was therefore moved up to take its place. The assault was now to be delivered by two battalions of the 1st Brigade and two fresh battalions of the 3rd, each brigade supported by one of the remaining battalions of the 1st Brigade. The fifth battalion of this latter, and two battalions of the 2nd Brigade (1/Loyal N. Lancashire and 1/9th King's) not yet engaged, were kept in divisional reserve. The units of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades which had made the first assault were to be withdrawn as soon as it was feasible. During the afternoon, as a further preparation, General Horne, commanding the 2nd Division, made arrangements with General Haking for his division to advance through the 1st Division in the event of the 4 P.M. assault being successful.

Although howitzer ammunition was very short, and to make up for it 18-pdr. H.E. shell—which had little effect on thick parapets—was largely used, the results of the 40-minutes bombardment were thought to be more effective than in the morning, particularly on the right, where in several places the German breastwork was seen to be partially demolished. The gaps through the wire were certainly increased, and in places it no longer formed an obstacle.

The assault by the leading battalions of the 1st (Guards) Brigade was unfortunately disjointed. The 1/Black Watch (Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Stewart) on the right was in position to time; but the arrival on its left of the 1/Camerons (Major E. Craig Brown) was delayed by that battalion having been sent back at 10.30 A.M. to garrison a third line trench, and, as it came up again, by the movement of troops of the 2nd Brigade withdrawing from the front breastworks. At 3.45 P.M. the commanding officer of the Camerons telephoned to the 1st Brigade, which he had already warned to the same effect when he received his orders, that he could not be ready by 4 P.M. Br.-General Lowther ordered the Black Watch to assault as ordered, the Camerons to follow as soon as they could.

At 3.57 P.M. the two leading companies of the Black Watch mounted the British breastwork and doubled for-

ward, their pipers playing across No Man's Land. Almost 9 May. simultaneously with the lift of the artillery, at 4 P.M., a number of them reached the German parapet. The Germans taken by surprise could not man their machine guns in time to stop this first rush. But when the Highlanders climbed over the breaches in the parapet they were met by a stubborn resistance and were mostly shot down. Only on the right where the bombardment had been more effective, did some fifty men press on towards the German support trench.¹ The Germans holding the front line at this point ran back down the communication trench and came into collision with reinforcements coming up, so that the Highlanders were able to open fire on the crowd of men with considerable effect. But they were too few in numbers to exploit this success; and the enemy, working round by other communication trenches, surrounded them and, throwing bombs and firing machine guns from behind the traverses of the front trenches, destroyed nearly the whole party. In the meantime, though the German machine guns had failed to stop the onrush of the front companies of the Black Watch, they effectively checked the supporting companies, which suffered very heavily in their efforts to get forward.²

One company and two half companies of the Camerons which were ready soon after 4 P.M. advanced on the left of the supporting companies of the Black Watch. They, too, lost heavily.³ The remainder of the battalion did not reach the front till 4.40 P.M., by which time it was abundantly clear that the assault had failed, and that the advance of additional troops could serve no purpose. Still the Germans must have been glad of a respite; for, as other battalions of the 1st (Guards) Brigade, exposed from the waist upwards, moved up behind the breastwork of the Rue du Bois—where in normal times every small party was shelled—not a single shot was fired. About this time a tremendous explosion took place at Herlies, where a 15-inch shell had fired a great German ammunition dump. A huge cloud hung over the locality for some time, and then drifted as a pinkish mist westward over Aubers ridge and

¹ Corporal J. Ripley, 1/Black Watch, was awarded the V.C. for his gallantry on this occasion.

² The 1/Black Watch lost 14 officers and 461 other ranks during the fight.

³ Of the 350 all ranks who left the front breastwork, 180 were casualties before they were half-way across No Man's Land, and the total loss was 9 officers and 240 other ranks.

9 May. across the British front, causing an alarm of "Gas" to be raised.

On the front of the 3rd Brigade German observers were seen looking over the parapet, and as soon as the assaulting lines of the 1/Gloucestershire and 1/South Wales Borderers crossed the British breastwork the machine guns opened a heavy fire. The leading companies advanced eighty to a hundred yards in face of a hail of bullets, but were unable to go further and lay down in No Man's Land, taking what cover they could.¹

At 4.35 P.M. the G.O.C. 1st Division, hearing of the check to the 1st and 3rd Brigades, issued orders for a further ten minutes bombardment of the German parapet, to be followed by another assault. The bombardment was carried out, but with no more effect than before, and on its termination both brigadiers felt that it was mere waste of life to send men forward. They therefore informed General Haking that they were unable to carry the enemy's defences, whereupon the divisional commander directed that the assaulting battalions, under cover of a further bombardment, should be withdrawn to the British front breastwork. A number of the men lying out in No Man's Land were, however, unable to get back until after dark.²

The Meerut Division likewise incurred very heavy losses, and made no progress. The relief of the Dehra Dun by the Bareilly Brigade³ was completed shortly before 4 P.M., but at a cost by fire of over two hundred men. Br.-General Southey had reported that the German breastworks had only been slightly battered; that the fire from them was as incessant as ever, even during the British bombardment; and that unless they could be demolished success was improbable. In reply, he had been ordered by his corps commander to press the assault at all costs, if necessary continuing the operations into the night. But immediately his men showed over the front parapet heavy and well directed machine-gun fire, even more intense than in the morning, was opened on them, whilst German infantrymen, exposing themselves recklessly, stood up and fired over the

¹ The 1/Gloucestershire lost 10 officers and 252 other ranks; the 1/South Wales Borderers, 9 officers and 224 other ranks.

² The German *55th Regiment* on this day lost 12 officers and 590 other ranks killed and wounded, and 9 missing, out of a total strength of approximately 2,500 all ranks.

³ Right to left—2/Black Watch (Lieut.-Colonel W. J. St. J. Harvey), 58th Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel C. E. D. Davidson-Houston), and 41st Dogras (Lieut.-Colonel C. W. Tribe); 1/4th Black Watch (Lieut.-Colonel H. Walker) in brigade reserve.

parapet. Only a few men of the Bareilly Brigade succeeded in crossing the dyke twenty yards ahead, the majority being killed or wounded before reaching it.¹ Br.-General Southey made two further attempts to get his front line forward by putting in the remaining companies of his leading battalions, but the men were shot on or close to the British parapet. At 4.40 P.M., in view of the great loss of life, he reported to the Meerut Division that it was useless to send forward the remainder of his brigade, exposed to the enemy's accurate and unshaken fire.² Thus all progress both in the I. Corps and Indian Corps came to an end.

By 5 P.M. the reports of the failure of the second assault on the front both of the I. and Indian Corps reached First Army headquarters. General Haig thereupon directed that no further reinforcements should be put in to support attacks that had failed. Any ground gained was to be held and the troops were to be re-formed and relieved—the 2nd Division took the place of the 1st—with a view to pushing in an attack with the bayonet at dusk, 8 P.M., with fresh troops. Arrangements were to be made to prepare this attack by a short and intense bombardment, and in the meantime slow and deliberate fire was to be maintained on those points that had held up the previous assaults. To assist the renewal of the offensive, General Haig placed the 5th London (141st) Brigade from First Army reserve at the disposal of the I. Corps.

THE ATTACK AT FROMELLES (THE LEFT ATTACK).

THE ASSAULT BY THE IV. CORPS

The left attack, 6,000 yards to the north of the right attack just described, was at first more successful, but in the end fared no better than that of the I. and Indian Corps. The IV. Corps which was charged with it held the line from Neuve Chapelle northwards to Bois Grenier.³

¹ L/Cpl. D. Finlay, 2/Black Watch, was awarded the V.C. for gallantry, and assistance to wounded.

² The Bareilly Brigade had lost over a thousand men in a few minutes:—

2/Black Watch,	8 officers and 226 other ranks ;
1/4th " "	7 " " 167 " "
58th Rifles	10 " " 222 " "
	(3 British)
41st Dogras	12 officers " 399 " "
	(5 British).

³ It was opposed by the four regiments of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division that defended an almost equal frontage behind breastworks twenty feet thick and six to seven feet high, similar to those on the I. and Indian Corps front. The distribution from south to north was:—the

9 May. General Rawlinson's plan was to attack with the 8th Division towards Rouges Bancs on a frontage of 1,400 yards astride the Saily—Fromelles road. This brought him, as was known at the time, against the centre of the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, that is, the *16th Reserve Regiment* and part of the *21st Reserve Regiment*.¹ Assuming the offensive to be unexpected there would be some ten German companies (say 1,600 men) immediately available in the front and support trenches to withstand the assault of the two leading brigades (approximately 7,000 men) of the 8th Division. It was hoped that this superiority would enable the front position to be captured in the first rush. The gap thus made was to be at once enlarged, the assaulting brigades spreading out and taking in flank and in rear the German front defences to the north and south.

Whilst the 8th Division advanced eastwards without delay, on Fromelles, the 7th Division was to follow close behind through the gap and thence, moving out right-handed, attack south-eastwards with Aubers and Leclercq Farm as first objectives. Its left would be covered by the 8th Division, and for the protection of its right, two battalions, supported by a battery R.F.A. to be placed north of Aubers, were specially detailed to occupy the southern edge of that village and secure Bas Pommereau, 500 yards to the south again.

The further course of the battle would depend on the general situation, but the intention was that the 7th Division should continue to gain ground towards La Cliqueterie Farm and Le Plouich, on Aubers ridge, whilst the 8th Division formed a defensive flank from Fromelles to La Cordonnerie Farm ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of Rouges Bancs). If both right and left attacks of the First Army were successful, the right of the 7th Division would join up with the left of the Indian Corps about La Cliqueterie Farm.

The artillery of the 49th (West Riding) Division, holding the line between the sector of assault and Neuve

17th Reserve, the 16th Reserve, the 21st Reserve and the 20th Reserve Regiments. Each German regiment had six companies in the front line and two in support, with the remaining four companies, 3,000 yards in rear in reserve, with a good view from higher ground of the situation near the front trenches. Early in April fresh drafts had replaced the Neuve Chapelle casualties, and had brought the strength of each regiment to approximately 38 officers, 160 N.C.O.'s and 1,970 men.—“*Bavarian Res. Regt., No. 21.*”

¹ Both the *17th* and *21st* sent assistance to the *16th Reserve Regiment* during the fight.—*Bavarian Official Account*, pp. 231-2.

Chapelle, was to contribute to the protection of the southern flank of the attacking division by bringing to bear on the enemy's trenches sufficient fire to hold his infantry on the portion of the front which was not being attacked. 9 May.

In addition to the preparation of trenches and dumps of stores, and other preliminaries similar to those of the I. and Indian Corps, two mine galleries, 285 and 330 feet long, respectively, had been driven by the 173rd Tunnelling Company R.E. (Major G. C. Williams, R.E.) under No Man's Land, and two mines laid under the German front trench on the left sector of assault.¹ A Bavarian account states that "the British offensive came "as a surprise on our front. No special preparations had "been noticed, and even the presence of the mines driven "under the front trenches of the regiment next to us had "not been perceived."² This is the more remarkable as, in spite of all precautions in carrying away the blue clay from the mine galleries in sand-bags, the ground near the mine shafts was clearly discoloured.

On the night of the 8th/9th May, Major-General F. J. Davies, commanding the 8th Division, moved forward the assaulting brigades into the front and support breastworks and trenches—held by the 2/ and 1/7th Middlesex (23rd Brigade)—astride the Fromelles road, facing Rouges Bancs, the 24th Brigade (Br.-General R. S. Oxley) on the right, the 25th Brigade (Br.-General A. W. G. Lowry Cole) on the left, each on a frontage of 700 yards. Besides a section of a field company R.E., a small force of mounted troops and cyclists to assist the advance beyond the German front line was allotted to each brigade, and in addition a section of a mountain artillery battery and four trench mortars with which to engage the enemy machine guns in any strong points that might be encountered. The remaining four battalions of the 23rd Brigade (Br.-General R. J. Pinney) were held in divisional reserve, but were to push through the 24th and 25th Brigades directly the latter reached their first objectives.

¹ The mines were 70 yards apart. Each contained 2,000 lbs. of gunpowder. The galleries were driven in a stiff blue clay, which underlay the 15 feet of water-bearing loam. The work on four galleries that had been driven in the 7th Division area further south had had to be abandoned before reaching the German trench, owing to flooding.

² "Bavarian Res. Regt., No. 17," p. 85. The German historian adds:—"Our own efforts at mining up to now had failed owing to the "amount of surface water, nevertheless the enemy had dug a gallery "through a belt of loam that underlay the thin clay stratum which held "the surface water. He thereby prepared a way for his initial success."

9 May. The 7th Division (Major-General H. de la P. Gough) was assembled with two brigades—the 20th (Br.-General F. J. Heyworth) and 22nd (Br.-General S. T. B. Lawford)—about a mile behind the 8th Division front line, and with the 21st Brigade (less two battalions with the 49th Division) under Br.-General H. E. Watts, in rear of them, in corps reserve. The forming-up places of these brigades were arranged so that they could move off at once in the required order:—the 22nd Brigade as the advanced guard, with a section (2 guns) of T Battery R.H.A., a mobile machine-gun section, No. 1 Trench Mortar Battery, 54th Field Company R.E., and a special wiring party of the Highland Field Company R.E.

Map 4. By 2.30 A.M., on the 9th May, all troops were in their assigned positions, their orderly assembly by night being a remarkable piece of work on the part of the brigade staffs. The bombardment, simultaneous with that on the front of the I. and Indian Corps further south, was carried out by No. 2 Group H.A.R. (Br.-General H. C. C. Uniacke) and the 7th and 8th Division artilleries of the IV. Corps,¹ to which the VII. Siege Brigade was attached—a total of 190 guns and howitzers, under command of Br.-General A. E. A. Holland of the 8th Division artillery. No. 2 Group H.A.R.² was detailed to demolish certain strong points and farms beyond the range of fire of the divisional batteries, and for counter-battery work in the sector Ligny le Grand—Aubers—Fromelles.³ The wire on the front of assault was to be cut by seventy-two 18-pdr. guns, the bombardment of the German position itself was to be carried out by the twelve 6-inch howitzers of the VII. Siege Brigade and eighteen 4.5-inch howitzers. Seven R.H.A.

¹ The Artillery Adviser of the IV. Corps was Br.-General A. H. Hussey. See f.n. p. 17.

² No. 2 Group H.A.R. consisted of:—

R.M.A.	(two 15-inch howitzers);
$\frac{1}{2}$ 12th Siege Battery	(two 9.2-inch howitzers);
$\frac{1}{2}$ 13th " "	(two 9.2-inch howitzers);
III. Heavy Brigade	(ten 4.7-inch guns);
VIII. " "	(ten 4.7-inch guns);
1st West Riding Heavy Battery	(four 4.7-inch guns);
1st Highland	(four 4.7-inch guns);
Armoured Trains "Churchill" (manned by personnel of the Navy) and "Deguise" (manned by Belgian artillerymen), with two 6-inch guns, two 4.7-inch guns, and one 4-inch gun.	

³ The German artillery supporting the defence consisted of 12 field batteries of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division about Aubers, Fromelles and Le Maisnil, and four Bavarian heavy batteries about Herlies and Fournes.

(13-pdr.) batteries were to form belts of fire behind the 9 May. enemy position and sweep the communication trenches so as to isolate the Germans holding the front position.

For the purpose of control during the bombardment, this artillery was divided into three main groups,¹ but as soon as the 7th Division moved forward and required independent artillery support for its attack on Aubers and Leclercq Farm, this control was to be modified and certain batteries were to revert to the 7th Division artillery command (Br.-General J. F. N. Birch).²

The bombardment began at 5 A.M., and whilst it was in progress reports were received from the front line that a quantity of shell, including 4.7 inch employed for counter-battery work, was falling short of the enemy defences. This, being due to wear and tear of the gun barrels and to faulty ammunition, could not be remedied, and consequently much of the fire failed to reach the German position and its defenders.³ During the final ten minutes the rate of fire was intense,⁴ and during this period the front companies of the leading battalions moved out across the breastworks and formed up ready for the assault in No Man's Land, which, on the extreme right, was 330 yards wide, but for the greater part of the front averaged only a hundred yards. Bayonets now began to show above the enemy parapet, giving indication that the defenders were fully on the alert.

The 24th and 25th Brigades were to move forward side Map 2.

¹ A Group (Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Alexander, V.C.) :

XXII. Bde. R.F.A. and XIV. Bde. R.H.A.

B Group (Lieut.-Colonel A. H. S. Goff) :

XXXIII. Bde. R.F.A. and XLV. Bde. R.F.A.

C Group (Lieut.-Colonel H. Rouse) :

I. Bde. R.H.A., V. Bde. R.F.A. and

I. West Riding Bde. R.F.A. (T).

The XXXV. Brigade and XXXVII. (How.) Brigade R.F.A., VII. Siege Brigade and No. 5 Mountain Battery were not grouped.

² One 6-inch howitzer battery ; two 4.5-inch howitzer batteries ; one brigade R.H.A. and two brigades R.F.A.

³ As soon as the 4.7-inch shell left the muzzle, the copper driving bands stripped, and the shell turned end over and fell anywhere, even 500 yards behind the British support trench.

⁴ The total expenditure of ammunition during the day (9th May) by the two divisions was as follows :—

	7th Division per gun.	8th Division per gun.
18-pdrs. shrapnel . . .	170	273
" H.E.	39	14
13-pdrs.	126	160
4.5-inch howitzer . . .	—	108 (Lyddite) ;
6-inch howitzer . . .	—	22 (Shrapnel) ;
		147 (Light Lyddite).

9 May. by side, one south and the other north of the Saily—Fromelles road. Opposite the 24th Brigade the German front was a pronounced salient and it was decided that the assault should be delivered only against the two sides: on the right by the 2/Northamptonshire (Major C. R. S. Mowatt), on the left by the 2/East Lancashire (Major H. Maclear), with a distance of about three hundred yards between the two. As the wire-cutting guns were 2,000 yards back, two guns of the 104th Battery, XXII. Brigade R.F.A., had been brought up during the night into specially prepared emplacements in the front breastwork, within 350 yards of the enemy's line. One of these guns, that on the right, breached several gaps of five to six yards in the German wire and breastwork, using H.E. shell; but the other, owing to weakness of the floor of the emplacement, was not able to shoot with accuracy.

The East Lancashire received heavy fire during the last phase of the bombardment, whilst the battalion was moving out in front of its breastwork to form up for the assault; its advance came to an end after covering rather more than one-third of the hundred to hundred and fifty yards which had to be traversed, for the Germans were standing up and using machine guns and rifles from the top of the parapet. The advance of the Northamptonshire began ten minutes after that of the East Lancashire. There were two hundred yards of open ground to cross under heavy machine-gun fire, yet one of the two leading companies reached the German breastwork and found a gap made by the gun of the 104th Battery. Here a party of one officer and thirty men entered the German line. The other Northamptonshire company reached the wire, but failed to find a passage through it, and was shot down there; the supporting companies were unable to reach the wire. At 6.10 A.M., half an hour after the first advance, Br.-General Oxley put in the 1/Sherwood Foresters (Major L. St. H. Morley) on the left in support of the East Lancashire. But when its leading companies were within forty yards of the enemy, they also were checked; and it could be seen that there was only one gap of a few yards in the front wire ahead, and that some sunken wire in the ditch immediately in front of the breastwork was untouched. A report to this effect was sent back to brigade headquarters.¹

¹ Corporal J. Upton, 1/Sherwood Foresters, was awarded the V.C. for gallantry in rescuing and tending wounded on this occasion.

Meantime, in accordance with the plan of pushing on ^{9 May.} as rapidly as possible and maintaining a continuous forward movement with fresh troops, the supporting battalions of the brigade had moved up to the front; and the leading battalions of the 23rd Brigade in reserve also arrived, so that all were crowded together and began to suffer loss from the German artillery fire, which now became active.

On the left a distance of four hundred yards separated the two assaults of the 25th Brigade. In front of the right column composed of the 2/Rifle Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel R. B. Stephens) and 1/Royal Irish Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel O. C. Baker) the wire had been well cut, and the hundred yards of No Man's Land was covered at a rapid pace in lines of platoons at thirty paces' distance. In spite of heavy losses, the leading companies stormed the German breastwork, though it was practically undamaged, and, after capturing a number of the *16th Bavarian Reserve Regiment*, pressed on to their first objective, the bend of the Fromelles road, two hundred yards beyond. The supporting companies, following closely, also reached the German line, and the 2/Rifle Brigade, by bombing, was able to extend the front it had captured to 250 yards.

The assault of the 1/13th London (Kensington) (Lieut.-Colonel F. G. Lewis), forming the left column of the 25th Brigade, was likewise successful. On the explosion of the two mines at 5.40 A.M., the leading companies occupied the craters, and on the arrival of the supporting troops, which pushed up in spite of heavy fire, they went on beyond Delangre Farm, passing the German third trench. There, as ordered, they swung to the left, and occupied the German communication trench, to form a protective flank on that side.

Forty minutes after zero, having been informed by telephone of the initial success, Br.-General Lowry Cole arrived at the front breastwork. He found that all forward movement had ceased, and that No Man's Land was being swept by heavy fire from the unattacked portions of the enemy front, especially from the breastwork between the two attacks of his brigade. He directed the 2/Lincolnshire (Major S. F. G. Cox), which still had two companies in hand, to endeavour to support the 1/13th London in the mine crater and from there work westward to join up with the 2/Rifle Brigade.¹ Shortly after he had given

¹ The companies eventually succeeded in reaching the German line west of the 1/13th London. Acting-Corporal C. Sharpe, 2/Lincolnshire, was awarded the V.C. for bombing and clearing the enemy out of first 50 yards and then of a further 250 yards of trench, after all his original party had fallen.

9 May. this order a number of men of the Rifle Brigade and Irish Rifles were seen streaming back over the German breastwork, bringing with them the other two companies of the 2/Lincolnshire, which had already advanced across No Man's Land and were lying behind the breastwork.¹ There was great confusion, and, to add to it, the German prisoners captured in the first assault, running for cover behind the British line, were mistaken for a counter-attack, whilst the advance of the supporting battalions to the front trenches led to an inextricable mixture of troops. Most strenuous efforts were made by the brigade staffs to restore order, and Br.-General Lowry Cole, standing on the parapet in his endeavour to stop the retirement, was mortally wounded.

On his death becoming known to General Davies, Br.-General Pinney, commanding the reserve brigade, the 23rd, was directed to take command of all the 8th Division troops north of the Sailly—Fromelles road. The situation as reported at 8.30 A.M. showed that, although there were still three lodgments in the German position,—those of the party of the Northamptonshire, of the Rifle Brigade and the Irish Rifles, and of the 13/London, that of the 2/Lincolnshire was not mentioned—the offensive had come to a standstill. The British front and communication trenches—converted almost into obstacles by the remains of broken ladders and light bridges—were blocked with dead, wounded and leaderless men, the congestion being constantly increased by the endeavours of the rearmost waves to reach the front. Movement forward, rearward or lateral became impossible, except over the open, and the Germans in the unattacked portions of the front were able to prevent not only substantial support, but even individuals from crossing No Man's Land. It was clear that the men who had formed the lodgments were cut off.

The standstill was reported through the IV. Corps headquarters to General Haig, who, with the object of assisting the French offensive,² and in view of the failure of the first assault of the I. and Indian Corps, ordered General Rawlinson to “press the attack vigorously and without delay on “Rouges Bancs”.”³ The 8th Division was instructed accordingly, but, in the circumstances, it was difficult to

¹ Exhaustive enquiry failed to discover any reason for the retirement, beyond the fact that someone unknown had shouted the order, “Retire at the double,” which was passed rapidly along the line.

² For the results achieved by the French, see Sketch 5, and Note I. at end of Chapter.

³ This message sent first at 8.45 A.M., was repeated at 11.45 A.M.

carry out a further general bombardment, since the exact ^{9 May.} limits of the occupied sectors of the German front trench could not be clearly defined. The G.O.C. IV. Corps therefore decided to concentrate the artillery on the 500 yards of trench south of the Fromelles road, between the road and the lodgment held by the party of the Northamptonshire. The renewed assault was to be delivered by the 24th Brigade, with the 2/Queen's (Major H. R. Bottomley) of the 7th Division in support, and by the 25th Brigade, with the 23rd Brigade in support. To allow time for reorganization, it was ordered to take place at 1.30 P.M. Meantime the leading troops were heavily shelled in their forming-up places—parallel lines of shallow trench in the open—and encountered violent fire from artillery, machine guns and rifles as soon as they attempted to leave them, most of the casualties indeed occurring before they got as far as the original support trenches.¹ The attack was therefore brought to nought before it could get under way.

On the failure of this renewed attempt to assault being reported to General Haig, he again urged the IV. Corps to press forward vigorously. To reinforce it, he placed the 21st Brigade, now in First Army reserve, at General Rawlinson's disposal; but on General Gough informing the latter that he had convinced himself by a personal reconnaissance of the uselessness of putting in the brigade, and of the certainty of any further attempt to attack by daylight being a failure, the brigades of the IV. Corps, like those of the I. and Indian Corps, were directed to reorganize preparatory to a renewal of the offensive at dusk, at 8 P.M.

THE DECISION TO BREAK OFF THE BATTLE

At 6 P.M., before the arrangements for the renewed attacks had been completed, it became clear to General Haig from the reports of his liaison officers that the fresh brigades of his three corps could not be got forward in time; for the roads and communication trenches to the front were blocked and the enemy's artillery prevented any extensive movement over the open. He therefore cancelled his orders for the renewal of the attack at 8 P.M., and rode to Lestrem, Indian Corps headquarters, where he directed the corps commanders and their senior staff officers to meet him, in order to consider the further offensive action of the

¹ The 2/East Lancashire lost 454 men; the 1/Sherwood Foresters 347, although only two companies attacked; the 1/Worcestershire 235 and the 1/5th Black Watch 146, without getting beyond the assembly trenches.

9 May. First Army. The decision at this conference lay between two schemes: the one to make a night assault with the bayonet, the other to wait for daylight and renew the assault after a further artillery preparation. The former was eventually discarded for the reason that it would have to be carried out by fresh troops who would not know the ground, and it was decided to postpone offensive action till daylight.

At 7.30 P.M. when the sun that had shone brightly on the battle zone throughout the day was setting, the conference broke up and the corps commanders returned to their headquarters to arrange the attacks for the following day, the 10th. At 11.30 P.M., after full consideration, the general outline of the renewed offensive was settled by telephone between the corps and First Army headquarters.¹ Meantime, the position of the detachments of the 8th Division which had effected lodgments in the German position at the first assault, had become desperate. Yet on the right, the party of the Northamptonshire held on until nightfall,² when sixteen men returned, bringing ten wounded with them.³ Every effort was made to reinforce the 2/Rifle Brigade and 1/R. Irish Rifles; the 15th Field Company R.E. dug a communication trench towards them,

¹ The I. Corps was to make the main attack at 4 P.M. after a bombardment of the German breastworks, chiefly by the heavy (9.2-inch and 6-inch) howitzers, lasting four hours.

The Indian Corps was to relieve its front line by fresh troops and be prepared to advance if the I. Corps assault was successful.

There was to be no attack by the IV. Corps on the 10th May unless the enemy provoked it, and the 8th Division was to continue to hold the front line. At first General Haig had ordered the 7th Division to relieve the 8th Division and renew the attack on the 10th May on a similar plan to that of the previous day. The commanders of the 7th and 8th Divisions were agreed, however, that the relief was not practicable during the night, owing to the disorganized state of the 8th Division, and further that, since the forming-up trenches had been badly broken in by the German artillery during the day, the assaulting battalions of the 7th Division would be greatly exposed whilst waiting to launch the attack. It was considered that an offensive begun under such adverse conditions could have little chance of success; but the suggestion was made that the 7th Division should be moved at once, that night, and put in south of Neuve Chapelle. This proposal, based on General Gough's personal visit to the front position, was forwarded by General Rawlinson to General Haig, who thereupon cancelled his own orders for the attack by the 7th Division, and subsequently acted on it.

² These brave men narrowly escaped annihilation by British 9.2-inch guns. An order was given to bombard the actual sector of trench they occupied. They were saved by the caution of the artillery commander concerned, who proceeded to help them by dropping shell on either flank, and breaking up an enemy counter-attack that was assembling.

³ The 2/Northamptonshire lost 12 officers and 414 other ranks out of the 20 and 867 with which it went into action.

and a few small parties with bombs and ammunition 10 May. reached them during the night. This assistance was inadequate and, after a strong German attack about 2.30 A.M. on the 10th, the survivors, some two hundred in all, were withdrawn.¹ Strenuous attempts were made by the 2/Lincolnshire and 2/Royal Berkshire (under Major H. M. Finch, who was killed) of the 25th Brigade to reinforce the 1/13th London; but although parties of both battalions succeeded in reaching the mine craters and entering the German trenches, their numbers were insufficient to maintain the position. So in the night the survivors of the 1/13th London and the men who had reinforced them were forced to return to the British lines.² By 3 A.M. on the 10th all the British troops were back in their own lines, and the enemy had regained his front position.

In the early hours of the 10th the reports of the very severe losses, ten thousand officers and men,³ sustained the previous day and of the limited amount of ammunition remaining reached First Army headquarters. General Haig at once decided that he must have further information and directed his corps commanders to meet him at I. Corps headquarters at 9 A.M. At the conference it transpired that the amount of ammunition available for the use of the First Army was not sufficient to continue two attacks which might last for several days;⁴ and further that the

¹ The 2/Rifle Brigade lost 21 officers and 632 other ranks; the 1/Royal Irish Rifles, 23 officers and 454 other ranks.

² The 1/13th London lost 13 officers and 423 other ranks out of 21 and 602, respectively.

³ The reports sent in gave the losses of the three divisions engaged as 145 officers and 9,400 men. As worked out later, the divisional totals were as follows:—

	Officers.	Other ranks.
1st Division	160	3,308
2nd "	—	20
7th "	1	24
8th "	192	4,490
Meerut "	94	2,535
Lahore "	7	115
47th "	2	77
49th "	2	92
	<hr/> 458	<hr/> 11,161

⁴ It was on the previous day, 9th May, that Lord Kitchener asked for 20,000 rounds 18-pdr. and 2,000 rounds 4.5-inch howitzer ammunition to be despatched from France to the Dardanelles (See "1915" Vol. I. p. 331). At that time there was no 18-pdr. H.E. or 4.5-inch howitzer lyddite at the base, so shrapnel was sent. On the 17th May, the nearest day for which there is a complete return, the rounds of H.E. and lyddite remaining on the L. of C. were:—

18-pdr., 3,014; 4.5-inch, 800; 5-inch, 2,138; 4.7-inch, 2,810;
60-pdr., 1,065; 6-inch, 140.

10 May. ammunition for the 4·7-inch batteries on the front of the IV. Corps assault had proved to be so defective as to render these guns practically useless for counter-battery work. It was generally agreed that the German defences, stronger than had been anticipated, would require deliberate and methodical preparation before another infantry assault could have any prospect of success. Moreover there were now on the ground only two Regular infantry brigades which could be employed for carrying on the assault south of Neuve Chapelle. General Haig therefore decided to cancel his orders for the attack that had been arranged for 4 P.M. He was now convinced that it was no longer practicable to press both attacks simultaneously on so wide a frontage, and since the Commander-in-Chief, in his instructions of the 5th April, had directed that the main effort was to be delivered south of Neuve Chapelle, General Haig decided that all the resources of the First Army should be concentrated there. The attack of the IV. Corps north of Neuve Chapelle was therefore suspended, and its 7th Division (Major-General H. de la P. Gough), which had not yet been engaged, was ordered to strengthen the offensive south of that village.

Although such a course might entail great losses, it was most urgent to deliver the offensive with as little delay as possible, in order to assist the French Tenth Army now heavily engaged on Vimy ridge. It was proposed in consequence that the 7th Division, together with the 2nd Division (I. Corps), should resume the offensive as soon as the necessary preliminary arrangements could be completed.

The views of the conference were reported to Advanced G.H.Q. at Hazebrouck, and Sir John French agreed to the postponement of further operations until the preparations for the revised attack were complete. At 1.20 P.M. orders giving effect to this decision were issued by the First Army. The 7th Division, with a full complement of artillery, accordingly marched after dark that night (10th/11th May) from the IV. Corps area to the north of Festubert, where it came under the I. Corps.

The results of the offensive of the 9th May were a serious disappointment, the more so as the French Tenth Army achieved very considerable initial successes. The German regiments in the front line opposite the British had been sufficient to withstand all attacks without assistance from reserves, which were thus available for employment against

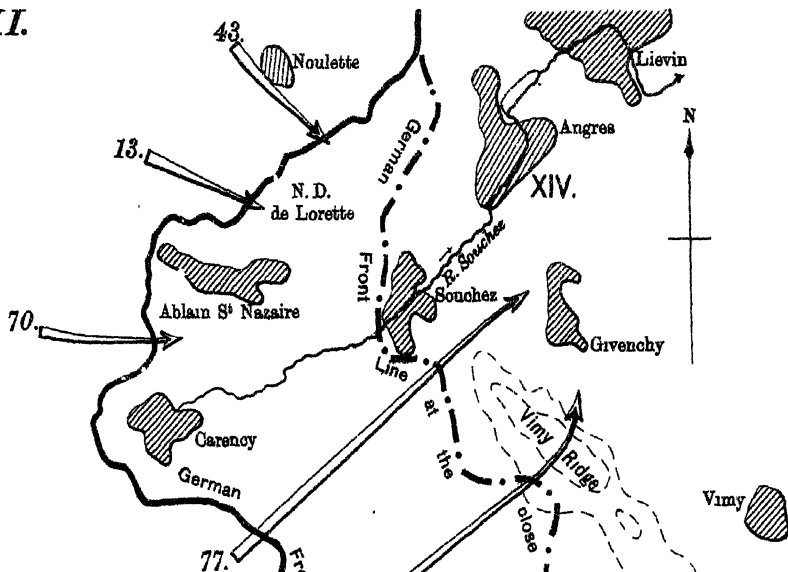
THE FRENCH OFFENSIVE IN ARTOIS.

SKETCH 5

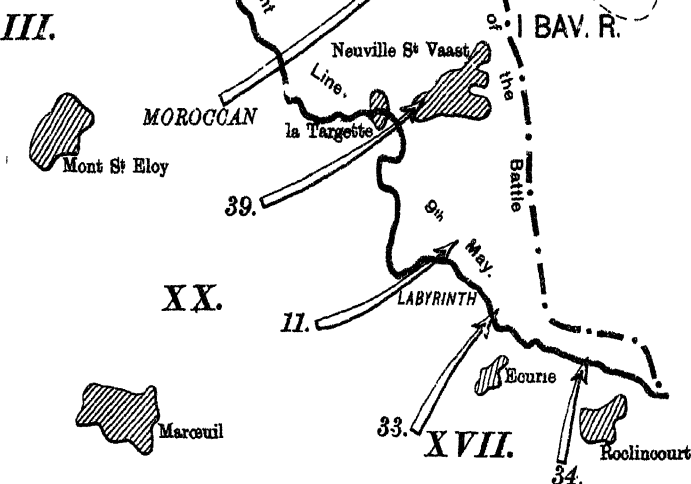
9TH MAY - 16TH JUNE 1915

SKETCH 5

XXI.

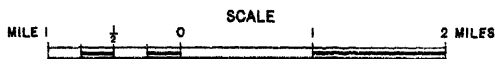


XXXIII.



XX.

XVII.



the French.¹ Their industry in improving their defences had been fully repaid: it was one more example of the truth of the German Army proverb that "sweat saves blood". A British infantry brigadier summed up the matter at the close of the battle in the words, "the sapper has beaten the gunner". *The Times* newspaper, in a leading article (14th May 1915) said "British soldiers died in vain on the Aubers Ridge on Sunday, because more shells were needed". Neither phrase entirely fitted the situation. The failure at Aubers Ridge was in fact due to three causes: first, the strength of the German defences and the clever concealment of machine guns in them; secondly, the lack on the British side of sufficient shells of large calibre to deal with such defences; and thirdly, the inferior quality of much of the ammunition supplied and the difficulties of ranging, so that the British gunners were unable to hit their targets and the German counter-batteries and machine guns were not silenced. Many of the fuzes, in particular those of the 15-inch howitzer, were defective owing to lack of competent inspection in the factories, and consequently the shells failed to burst on striking the sodden ground. According to British aeroplane reports the registration before the battle was useless; for the changed atmospheric conditions and the previous wear of the guns resulted in many of the shells falling short. As a general result, the brief 40-minutes bombardment, though it raised a curtain of dust and smoke immediately above the enemy's front line, did no appreciable damage, and merely gave the enemy warning to stand-to to meet an assault which he had been expecting.²

NOTE I

THE FRENCH OFFENSIVE OF 9TH MAY 1915 (SECOND BATTLE OF ARTOIS)³

The offensive of the French Tenth Army (18 divisions and 8 cavalry divisions) that was begun on the 9th May 1915 north of Arras, and fifteen miles south of the British attack at Aubers ridge, Sketch 5.

¹ See Note II. at end of Chapter.

² Germans shouted to the 2nd Brigade that they had been expecting an attack for 24 hours. The blowing down of a factory chimney in the Rue du Bois on the 8th, because it obstructed the fire of the wire-cutting guns, may have aroused suspicion. From various sources it appears that the Germans received information of an impending attack about the 8th May; but as it did not take place, they relaxed their vigilance until it was again aroused on the 8th.

³ From the French Official Account, Tome iii.

9 May. was the first of several great battles fought by the Allies to drive the Germans from Vimy ridge. The Tenth Army under General d'Urbal, delivered the main attack with its centre and had the crest of Vimy ridge as its immediate objective. The occupation of this dominating position was of primary importance for the further advance into the plain of Lens and Douai. Subsidiary attacks were made on either flank, the right along the spur south of Bailleul Sire Berthoult, the left against the high ground of Notre Dame de Lorette.

On the front attacked the enemy had 4 divisions, reinforced on the evening of the 9th May by 2 others. This number was gradually increased, so that by the 15th there were 13 divisions opposite the Tenth Army, and this remained the total until the end of the battle.

After artillery preparation lasting six days, the first real bombardment of the war—the long drawn out thunder of which was deeply impressive even to those who did not see its material effect—the attack was launched at 10 A.M.¹ The main attack was carried out with great spirit; although the XX. and XXI. Corps accomplished very little, the XXXIII. Corps (General Pétain) in the centre overran in one rush the German front defences and pressed on to a distance of 2½ miles on a frontage of four miles between La Targette and Carency. In less than two hours the Arras—Souchez road was crossed and parties had pressed on to the crest of Vimy ridge between La Folie farm and Souchez village. The rapidity and success of this advance had, however, greatly exceeded all expectation, with the unfortunate result that the French reserves were not ready—the nearest division of the Army reserve was 7½ miles away—and could not be brought up in time to exploit the gain before the Germans had taken measures to close the gap. In a few hours the advantages gained by the excellence of the preliminary preparations had been lost, and the battle reverted to the wearing-down process that had already become familiar in the previous offensives. On the flat plain, behind the steep eastern slope of Vimy ridge, the Germans unobserved could bring up reinforcements and supplies to their front defences, whereas the French communications lay across the broad open plateau in full view of the German observation posts.

The fighting, mostly at close quarters in the trenches, was of a most desperate character. It developed into isolated encounters, and as soon as the French captured one strong redoubt or collection of trenches, another of equal strength was found, ready dug, immediately behind it. The stubborn German resistance, added to the natural advantages of the enemy position, made progress very slow. After hard fighting which continued day and night during the following week Carency and Ablain St. Nazaire were gradually captured house by house at a heavy cost of life. The commanding position on the corner of the plateau of Notre Dame de Lorette, both the chapel and chateau, was also occupied. But the crest of Vimy ridge was not reached, and tactically the operation had ceased to offer any profit. The French offensive, nevertheless, led to the

¹ The artillery taking part consisted of 780 field guns, 298 heavy guns (including 44 of 9.5-cm.), 55 of 3.7-cm. and 124 of 5.8-cm. French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 27.

The number of rounds fired was :—

field artillery . . .	1,813,490
heavy „ . . .	342,372 <i>idem.</i> p. 100.

belief that a break-through on a scale far greater than that almost 9th May. achieved at Neuve Chapelle two months previously was a feasible proposition, given an attack on a sufficiently wide front with adequate and methodical artillery preparation. On the 15th May, General Foch decided to continue it with the object of securing a good base for a further carefully prepared effort against Vimy ridge. Such a plan was in accordance with the larger policy of wearing down the enemy and holding all possible Germans on the Western front, in order to bring relief to the Russians and to encourage the entry of Italy into the ranks of the Allies, an event that now appeared imminent.

NOTE II

THE GERMANS ON THE 9TH MAY

Little is said about the British attack in German histories ; they recognize that it was undertaken to assist the main, the French, attack. As the British bombardment was not begun on the 3rd May, like the French, but only on the morning of the 9th, the attack more or less came as a surprise, but the local troops, secure behind strong and intact defences, had had their suspicions aroused in time and were able to deal with it.

At 2 P.M. the German *Sixth Army*, in view of the situation, ordered the only two divisions in reserve in the neighbourhood, the *58th Division* at Roubaix and the *115th* at Tournai, to stand to arms. By evening it was clear that the danger on the British front had been averted, and that night both these divisions were entrained and moved southwards to reinforce the left of the *Sixth Army* front, between Lens and Arras, then hard-pressed by the French Tenth Army. The *58th Division* began to leave Roubaix about 8.30 P.M., and was railed by way of Lille—Seclin—Henin Liétard to south of Lens ; the *115th Division* left Tournai the same night, going by way of Orchies to the Vimy battle zone.¹ The *Sixth Army* had then no reserves opposite the British front between Armentières and the La Bassée canal.

¹ " Regt. No. 107 " ; " Field Art. Regt. No. 112 ".

CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT, 15TH-27TH MAY 1915

THE PRELIMINARIES AND FIRST PHASE

(Maps 1, 5 ; Sketches B, 6)

THE DECISION TO RENEW THE FIRST ARMY OFFENSIVE NORTH OF THE LA BASSÉE CANAL

Sketch B. ALTHOUGH the desperate situation of the Second Army at Ypres, where the Battle of Frezenberg Ridge (8th-13th May) was in progress, caused Sir John French the gravest anxiety, he had no thought of abandoning his offensive operations. The preparations for a further attack by the First Army had been begun, as already mentioned, on the 10th May, before the fighting at Aubers had actually died down. Chief of these preliminaries was the move of the 7th Division from the IV. Corps area to that of the I. Corps. This took place uneventfully during the night of the 10th/11th May. By 4 A.M. on the 11th May the troops of the division had reached their destinations in reserve west of Béthune, the artillery brigades going on straight to their battle positions. During the two following nights the 21st Brigade (Br.-General H. E. Watts) took over the front line north of Festubert, relieving part of the 142nd Brigade (Br.-General Hon. C. S. H.-D. Willoughby), the 2nd Division relieving the remainder of the 47th Division.¹

On the night of the 12th/13th two brigades of the

¹ On 11th May the 1/2nd London Division (see f.n. p. 6) received its new designation, becoming the 47th (London) Division. At the same time, its brigades, the 4th, 5th and 6th London Infantry Brigades, became the 140th, 141st and 142nd Infantry Brigades, respectively. The cyclists, signals, divisional ammunition column, divisional ammunition park, supply column, train and sanitary section, also received new numbers. The designation of the R.A. units, R.E. field companies and the field ambulances remained unchanged for the moment.

1st Division took the place of the 4th (Guards) Brigade in the Cuinchy—Givenchy sector.

Very considerable pressure was brought to bear on the British Commander-in-Chief at this time both by General Joffre and General Foch, to induce him to continue offensive action. The period between the first German gas attack at Ypres on the 22nd April, and the close of the battle of Festubert on the 27th May, was one of the most difficult in the relations of the two Allied headquarters. As narrated in the previous volume, Sir John French was greatly perturbed by the dangerous position of the Second Army in the Ypres Salient, its left completely exposed as a result of the hasty retirement of the French 45th and 87th Divisions, and by the unpleasant fact that nothing ever came of General Foch's repeated assurances that a great counter-attack would be made by his troops to regain the ground lost and restore the situation at Ypres. To comply with General Foch's demand for joint action Sir John French sent reinforcements of men, guns and ammunition northward, whilst General Joffre, on the other hand, held that, in their anxiety for Ypres, the British were not "pulling their weight" and were upsetting his plans. The French Commander-in-Chief went so far as to declare that the war would be lost if the Allies did not take the opportunity of driving the enemy out of France whilst his main attention was directed towards his Russian campaign. Even after General Joffre had on the 1st May overruled General Foch's views and given his approval to the withdrawal of the British to a new line closer to Ypres, Sir John French's troubles there were not at an end; and the situation in regard to the French continued uneasy for nearly four weeks. The Field-Marshal was also embarrassed by the very serious shortage of gun ammunition, particularly of 4.5-inch howitzer ammunition, some of which he had been ordered to send to the Dardanelles. The reserve of small arms ammunition was down to 92 rounds per rifle. He was, however, more upset by the non-arrival of the new divisions which he expected, the 14th (Light) Division, otherwise ready, being delayed on the grounds that there was no gun or rifle ammunition for it. Yet he had based his plans for co-operation with the French upon the assurance of the Secretary of State that reinforcements would be provided.

It will be anticipating only a few days to say here that Lord Kitchener had been gravely impressed by the result

May. of the Second Battle of Krithia (6th-8th May 1915),¹ followed as it was by the ill-fortune of the First Army at Aubers on the 9th May, and the news of the successes of the Austro-Germans in Galicia. During the first days of May they had broken through and seemed to be rolling up the Russian front. The optimistic view that Germany was seriously weakened as a result of the prolongation of the struggle had been entirely disproved by facts, and the British Secretary of State for War anticipated an early return to France from Russia of the German striking force. It seemed that every available man would then be needed to assist our Ally, and he conceived that this would be the moment for the Germans to attack the coast of England in order to prevent him from sending reinforcements to the Continent. He told the War Council at a meeting on the 14th May that he could not at present contemplate denuding England by the despatch overseas of any of the New Armies. The 14th and 12th Divisions were sent to France during the latter part of the month, but Lord Kitchener had little hope of immediate success and sent them solely to satisfy the French Commander-in-Chief. In one of his very rare expressions of opinion on paper, he wrote to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, "Sir John French may possibly "have 7 divisions in reserve—also a good supply of "artillery ammunition which he thought would be sufficient, "and 7,500 rounds a night increase to be kept up steadily. "It may be doubtful whether this will enable him to break "through. But the French have an almost unlimited "supply of ammunition including H.E. and 14 divisions "in reserve so if they cannot get through we may take "it as proved that the lines cannot be forced."

On the 12th May Sir John French, still uncertain what troops he would have at his disposal, had interviews with both Generals Joffre and Foch, during which the French Commander-in-Chief expressed considerable dissatisfaction at the delay in the offensive of the First Army. To this delay he attributed the unwelcome news that the only German reserves opposite the British front, the *58th* and *115th Divisions*, had already been moved southwards to reinforce the Arras—Vimy sector against the French Tenth Army. He was therefore anxious either that the First Army should attack at once, or that it should relieve a French division south of the La Bassée canal, so that the

¹ Sir Ian Hamilton telegraphed to London on the 9th May: "the result has been failure. . . ."

latter might be freed to reinforce the Vimy offensive. May. Alternative proposals were discussed, such as the despatch of the British 2nd and 7th Divisions from the north to the south of the La Bassée canal, in order to carry out an offensive in actual combination with the left of the Tenth Army.¹ Sir John French, who wished to consult the commander of the First Army, reserved his decision until the following morning.

The elaboration of General Haig's plans for the renewed offensive north of Festubert was now well advanced, and he was averse to making any alteration, either by advancing the date or by the substitution of an attack south of the canal. The failure of the operations on the 9th May had led him to depart definitely from the procedure of the previous British attacks. From the reports of the fighting he had drawn the conclusion that the German defences were so strongly built, and the machine guns so well placed that a rapid infantry assault with distant objectives, preceded by merely a short, sudden and intensive burst of artillery fire, was no longer a practicable operation. He now proposed to follow the French method of a long methodical bombardment of the German defences by heavy artillery, chiefly 9·2-inch, 6-inch and 5-inch howitzers, in order to ensure the destruction of the enemy's wire and the demolition of the machine-gun emplacements and strong points before the infantry was sent forward. General Haig considered that to wear down the power of resistance and shake the morale of the enemy this bombardment should last for at least two or three days, and be carried on continuously day and night. He therefore desired to postpone the infantry assault until the 15th May.

Sir John French agreed to this alteration of procedure and consented to allow General Haig to carry out the offensive at his own time. Nevertheless, since General Foch was urging G.H.Q. to immediate action so as to attract the German reserves that were reported to be hurrying from various parts of the line to the Arras—Vimy front, the Field-Marshal determined to relieve at once the French 58th Division, then in position on the immediate right of the British from Cuinchy southward to the

¹ Orders were actually prepared at First Army headquarters on 12th May for a move of the 2nd and 7th Divisions; to permit this the Indian Corps was to take over the front of the 2nd Division along the Rue du Bois to Chocolat Menier Corner.

May. Vermelles—Le Rutoire—Loos road. In order to avoid interference with General Haig's plans for the offensive of the First Army, Sir John French decided to carry out this relief with the Canadian Division, whose infantry brigades were then at Bailleul in reserve to the Second Army, although its guns were in action.¹ Unfortunately it did not suit the French to leave artillery; they insisted on moving their 58th Division, if at all, as an intact formation.²

Sketch 6. In the circumstances, there remained no choice
Map 1. but to employ a division of the First Army, and the 1st Division, with sufficient but not complete artillery, was accordingly ordered to march on the night of the 14th/15th May and take over the 5,500 yards of front held by the French 58th Division south of the canal.

The 47th Division, less one brigade left training in the Béthune area,³ after relief by the 7th Division, took the place of the 1st Division north of the canal. By First Army order of the 13th May, the 1st and 47th Divisions were temporarily formed into a force, known as "Barter's Force", under the command of Major-General C. St. L. Barter, G.O.C. 47th Division. He was made responsible for the defence of the line from Festubert southwards across the canal to the Vermelles—Loos road.

To strengthen the I. Corps in view of this extension of its front, and as a reserve for the proposed offensive, G.H.Q. ordered the Canadian Division (still without its artillery) to move from Bailleul to the area Busnes—Robecq—Calonne (10 miles west of Cuinchy) on the morning of the 15th.

The disposition of the First Army prior to the renewed offensive was therefore as follows: for the operation itself the I. Corps had the 7th and 2nd Divisions concentrated in depth on a frontage of nearly three miles between Festubert and Richebourg l'Avoué (one mile north of Ferme Cour d'Avoué). The Canadian Division was in I. Corps reserve. As a general reserve Sir John French kept at his disposal the Indian Cavalry Corps and the 51st

¹ Two of the three Canadian artillery brigades had left the Ypres Salient, being relieved by the 4th Division artillery, but had gone to the Ploegsteert area; the third was still at Ypres. They did not rejoin the division until the 18th May.

² General Foch consented to leave two heavy (155-mm.) batteries at Annequin, south of the canal, behind the new British front.

³ The artillery of the division had at once gone into the line upon arrival in France, but the infantry did not do so until the 25th April when the division took over the Festubert—L'EpINETTE sector.

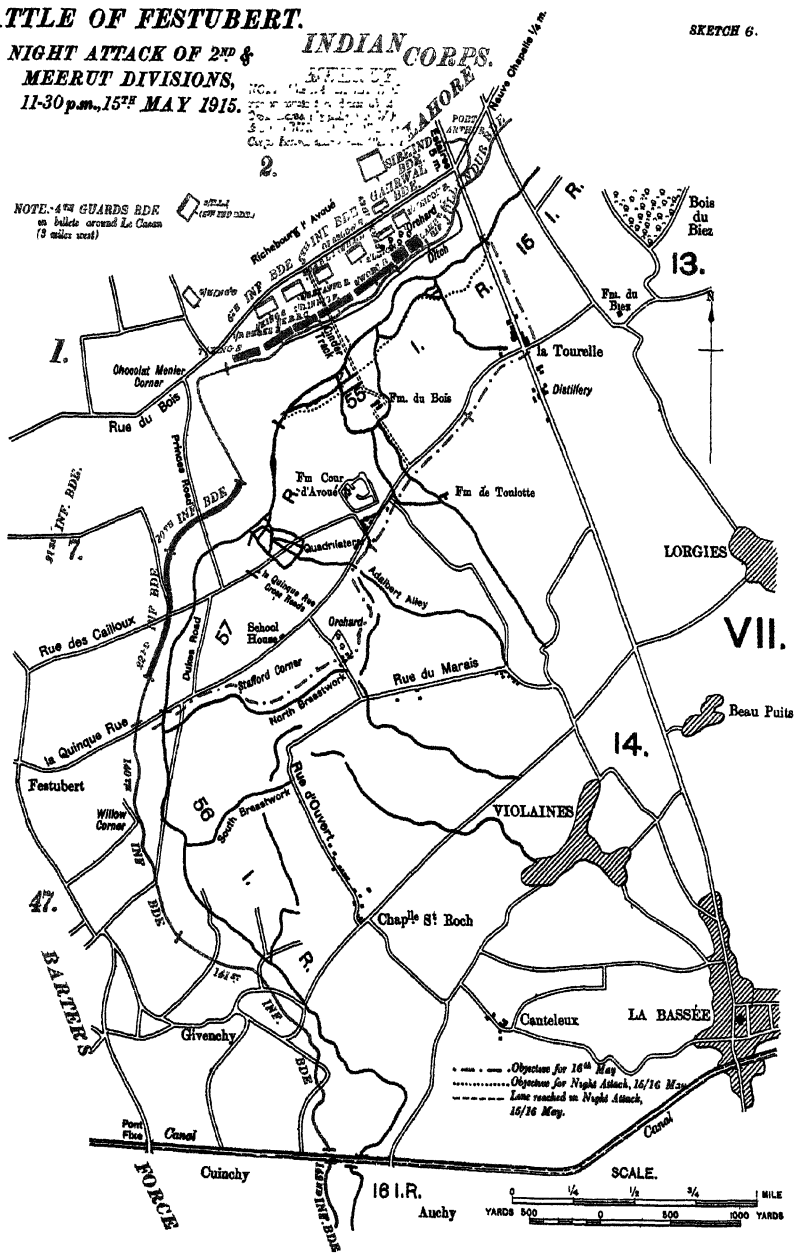
'BATTLE OF FESTUBERT.

NIGHT ATTACK OF 2ND &
MEERUT DIVISIONS,
11-30 p.m., 15TH MAY 1915.

INDIAN CORPS.

SKETCH 6.

NOTE: 4TH GUARDS BDE
on bullock around La Cassin
(5 miles west)



(Highland) Division,¹ the latter marching on the night of May. the 14th May to an area between Bailleul and Cassel.

Southwards, from Festubert to the Vermelles—Loos road, Barter's Force, the 47th and 1st Divisions, was responsible for the defence of the line; whilst to the north of the I. Corps sector of assault, the Indian Corps and the IV. Corps held the six miles of front from Richebourg l'Avoué past the eastern side of Neuve Chapelle to Bois Grenier.²

THE PLAN OF OPERATIONS

After preliminary meetings on the 10th and 11th May, **Map 1.** the final details of the operations were settled at a conference between General Haig and his corps and divisional commanders, their senior General Staff officers and artillery commanders, held on the 12th May at I. Corps advanced **Sketch 6.**

¹ This division (see Order of Battle, Appendix 2) was concentrated in France (Lillers district, First Army area) by the 5th May. It represented the Highland Territorial Division, recruited from the Highlands and centre of Scotland. After its first concentration at Bedford, its war station, in August 1914, it had furnished six battalions, two mountain batteries (of its Mountain Artillery Brigade), a field company R.E., a field ambulance and a mobile veterinary section for service in France and Gallipoli. These units had been replaced by 2nd-Line units; but it was considered that the six new infantry battalions would not be ready to accompany the division abroad, and the latter was therefore completed by a brigade of Lancashire Territorial battalions (one a 2nd-Line unit), and the 1/6th and 1/7th Black Watch from a spare brigade allotted to Scottish Coast Defence.

On the 11th May 1915, the division was renamed the 51st (Highland) Division, its brigades being numbered 152nd (Seaforth and Argyll), 153rd (Gordon and Black Watch) and 154th (Lancashire battalions). It was the last of the 1st-Line Territorial divisions to go to France, the 53rd and 54th being sent to Gallipoli in July, whither the 52nd had already proceeded.

² The disposition of the German *VII. Corps* had not appreciably altered since the 9th May (see Sketches 4 and 6). The *13th Division*, on the north, had all its three infantry regiments, the *13th*, *15th* and *55th* in the front line, each on an approximate frontage of 2,000 yards. The *14th Division* continued the line to the south of the La Bassée canal, also with all its infantry regiments, *57th*, *58th* and *16th*, in front line. Each of these infantry regiments held its sector of front and support trenches with two battalions, the remaining battalion being in rest billets, two to three miles behind. The only other troops in this area were those in *VII. Corps* reserve. These consisted of the *11th Jäger Battalion*, south of the canal, a company of the *24th Engineer Battalion*, and a squadron of cavalry. The German *Sixth Army* had now no reserves opposite the British front, as the *53th* and *115th Divisions* had moved south to oppose the French Tenth Army.

Sir John French, in a letter to General Haig dated 11th May 1915, wrote: "The strength of your Army is far superior to the hostile forces in front of you. The enemy has suffered heavy losses in the fighting near Arras, and he has few or no reserves, other than local, which he can bring up."

12 May. headquarters. In particular the details of the artillery bombardment and of the co-operation between corps, divisions and brigades were discussed and determined. The general idea for the infantry assault was similar to that of the 9th May, though on a less ambitious scale. The German front defences were to be breached in two places: by the 7th Division north of Festubert and by the 2nd Division from the Rue du Bois north of Chocolat Menier Corner, but with a gap of only six hundred yards between them as compared with the gap of six thousand yards between the right and left assaults of the 9th May. And whereas on that day the first common objective of the two attacks had been Aubers ridge, entailing an advance of 3,000 yards, it was now to be the line of La Quinque Rue, the road from Festubert to La Tourelle, roughly 1,000 yards ahead.

Major-General H. S. Horne, commanding the 2nd Division, proposed to carry out the assault by night, over the ground now so well known, in order to gain a footing in the first two lines of German trenches before dawn. After the first success, however, he proposed to await daylight, as the dykes and other obstacles beyond the German support trench might dislocate any further advance in the dark. For the 7th Division, just brought from the Fromelles area, on the other hand, the battle area was fresh ground, and a night operation was not considered practicable.

The offensive was therefore to open with an assault under cover of darkness by two brigades of the 2nd Division, the left supported by a brigade of the Meerut Division, on a total frontage of 1,600 yards between Chocolat Menier Corner and Port Arthur, with the object of carrying the German front and support trenches. At daylight the operation was to be given a fresh impetus from the south by an assault of the 7th Division on a frontage of 850 yards immediately north of Festubert, the 2nd Division renewing its advance simultaneously from the line of the captured German support trench. Although at the start the inner flanks of these two divisions would be separated by a gap of six hundred yards, it was hoped that the assaulting lines, spreading out as they moved forward over the open ground behind the German defences, would join up on reaching their objective, La Quinque Rue. The line of this road was to be held and consolidated for defence. The right flank would be secured by the 47th Division, whilst on the left, the Meerut Division was to advance and build up as

rapidly as possible a left defensive flank along the line of 13 May, the Port Arthur—La Bassée road.

Whilst the assaulting brigades were being re-formed along the La Quinque Rue and communications established, a general bombardment was to be continued along the whole front of the First Army, with a special concentration on the next objective, the line Rue d'Ouvert (western end)—Rue du Marais, preparatory to a further infantry advance on Chapelle St. Roch—Violaines—Beau Puits.

In addition to local reconnaissance work and co-operation with the artillery, the 1st Wing Royal Flying Corps, attached to the First Army, was to carry out a bombing programme on rather a larger scale than that of the 9th May. Its objectives were various villages believed to be German rest billets, and also certain known observation posts behind the German lines, such as the church tower of La Bassée. All aeroplanes concerned were to start at dawn on the day of assault, and not to fly below 6,000 feet. Special expeditions were also to be made with the objects of damaging German headquarters and communications and attacking trains that might be reported in movement on the Lille—Douai and Lille—La Bassée railways. The other arrangements for assistance from the air were similar to those at the Battle of Aubers Ridge.

The First Army operation order giving effect to the arrangements for the battle was issued to all units concerned on the 13th May,¹ and that of the I. Corps on the following day.²

G.H.Q. in two letters to General Haig, dated the 11th and 14th May, gave formal sanction to the new procedure that the latter had proposed. In the second it was said: "The Commander-in-Chief considers that you should "be prepared to prosecute a deliberate and persistent "attack. The enemy should never be given a complete "rest either by day or night, but be gradually and relentlessly worn down by exhaustion and loss until his defence "collapses. As the element of surprise is now absent "[owing to the length of the artillery preparation] it is "probable that your progress will not be rapid . . . and "you are not therefore at present required to push your "attack to gain the La Bassée—Lille road."

A short and intense bombardment, followed by a breakthrough and an advance with unlimited objectives was thus abandoned, and replaced by the slow and deliberate

¹ Appendix 9.

² Appendix 10.

13 May. methods with limited objectives favoured by the French. In fact, the battle of Festubert was to initiate on the British front the policy known since the American Civil War as "attrition": the wearing down of a stubborn foe by the resolute use of superior numbers.

THE PRELIMINARY BOMBARDMENT

Map 5. The bombardment of the German defences on a frontage of 5,000 yards between Festubert and Port Arthur was to begin on the morning of the 13th May, and be continued without cessation throughout the 13th and 14th. It was carried out by No. 1 Group H.A.R. and the artillery of the 2nd, 7th and Meerut Divisions, with the assistance of six French 75-mm. batteries (3 guns per battery since April), and a number of attached brigades and batteries from the Indian Cavalry Corps, 47th Division and 51st Division. Thus there were originally seven horse and field brigades, three siege brigades and a heavy battery, under the 2nd Division; nine horse and field brigades, two siege brigades and two heavy batteries, under the 7th Division;¹ and four field brigades under the Meerut Division: a total of 433 guns and howitzers on the front of attack and co-operating on the flanks.² No commander was appointed for the artillery as a whole; in the Armies and corps the artillery general officer attached to headquarters still had only the status of "Artillery Adviser". The highest artillery command was exercised by the G.O.'s C. R.A. of the 2nd, 7th and Meerut Divisions (Br.-Generals W. H. Onslow, J. F. N. Birch and R. St. C. Lecky), and the commander of No. 1 Group Heavy Artillery Reserve (Br.-General G. McK. Franks). Co-ordination was arranged for by the General Staff.

¹ Besides these, the artillery of the 47th, 51st and Canadian Divisions were at one time or another acting directly under the orders of the C.R.A. 7th Division, who thus, for the first occasion in the war, exercised to all intents and purposes a corps artillery command.

² Howitzers:—

15-inch, 2; 9·2-inch, 9; 6-inch, 36; 5-inch, 20; 4·5-inch, 54.

Guns:—

6-inch, 4; 60-pdrs., 12; 4·7-inch, 4; 18-pdrs., 210; 13-pdrs., 48; 15-pdrs., 16; 75-mm., 18.

See Map 5 (on which the French guns are omitted) for the artillery targets. The 75-mm. were particularly useful in forming enfilade "standing barrages" (that is a barrage on a fixed line generally perpendicular to the front) in which the high rate of fire and accuracy of these guns were most valuable. Unfortunately, owing to premature bursts, the strength of 18 was soon reduced to 7.

The artillery action followed a definite programme. On each day the divisional artillery carried out three bombardments of the German front defences, each of two hours duration, at a slow rate and with most careful observation of fire. The 6-inch siege howitzer batteries specially detailed for the destruction of the enemy parapet, were each allotted approximately 250 yards of front; whilst the 4·5-inch howitzers were to bombard the support and communication trenches and certain important salients in the line for destructive effect. Part of the field guns attacked the wire entanglements with slow observed fire. For the first time wire-cutting may be described as deliberate: every round fired on the first two days was observed, and the wire on the I. Corps front was effectively cut. Other field guns and the R.H.A. batteries kept the communication trenches under fire for man killing purposes. 13 May.

A great deal of registration was also carried out by the field and medium howitzers, and it was expected that there could be no complaints of inaccurate map-shooting, as there had been at Neuve Chapelle.¹ This preliminary shooting brought reports from observing officers and officers' patrols sent to reconnoitre up to the German line, that many of the howitzer shells failed to explode: further testimony to the inadequate inspection of fuzes in the munition factories.²

By night the heavy batteries maintained their fire on the same points at a reduced rate, the field guns carrying on an intermittent bombardment with shrapnel along the communication trenches and other approaches in order to stop supplies and reinforcements being brought up, and also on the German defences to prevent the repair of wire and parapets. The ammunition expended by the divisional artillery during the preliminary bombardment was approximately 50 rounds per howitzer and 100 rounds per field gun each 24 hours.³

No. 1 Group H.A.R., which had been reinforced from No. 2 Group H.A.R. with one 15-inch and one 9·2-inch siege

¹ It will be seen, however, in Chapter IV. that from lack of co-ordination and central control of the artillery, areas to which the infantry had advanced were shelled.

² Earl Haig's comment is: "Much of the artillery ammunition was very faulty until 1917. Especially was this the case during the Somme fighting." The ground was indeed littered with "duds".

³ The actual expenditure of ammunition by the artillery of the I. Corps during the bombardment was:—18-pdr., 50,897; 4·5" how., 7,056; 60-pdr., 4,404; 6" how., 6,711; 5" how., 2,174; 13-pdr., 25,346; 15-pdr., 3,855; 2·75", 923; total, 101,366.

13 May. howitzers, one 4·7-inch battery, and the Deguise Armoured Train, was allotted special targets: ¹ the three 9·2-inch howitzers selected points in the German defences; and the two 15-inch howitzers the villages of Beau Puits and Violaines and the Distillery, a strong point at the northern end of La Bassée on the Estaires road.

The counter-batteries, all under No. 1 Group H.A.R., consisted of the 48th and Canadian Heavy Batteries (60-pdrs.), the 111th Heavy Battery (4·7-inch) and the 8th Siege Battery (6-inch), and were assisted by aeroplanes fitted with wireless apparatus. The expenditure of ammunition on this most difficult task of attempting to destroy the German guns proved of doubtful value: all of the enemy batteries were alive when the assault took place; and adequate provision could not then be made for driving the German gun detachments to cover and so keeping them from maintaining fire.

Three French heavy batteries (twelve 155-mm. guns) near Annequin Fosse, south of the La Bassée canal, dealt with the enemy batteries and other objectives south of Violaines.²

The success of the bombardment of the defences depended to a great extent on accurate observation of fire, and this again was in a great measure dependent on the weather. After two fine, warm days, the 10th and 11th May, the sky clouded over on the afternoon of the 12th, and rain began to fall during the night. This continued steadily throughout the 13th and the following night making the observation of fire most difficult and at the same time rendering the ground so sodden and sticky that the effect of the burst of the high explosive shell was much diminished. During the morning of the 14th it began to clear, and General Haig asked the opinion of the commanders of the infantry formations detailed for the assault as to whether the damage done by the bombardment was sufficient to render success

¹ Br.-General H. C. C. Uniacke, with the headquarter staff of No. 2 Group H.A.R., was ordered to the Second Army on the 11th May, and on the 13th his Group was reconstituted in the Ypres area (See "1915" Vol. I. p. 388). The batteries formerly under Br.-General Uniacke in the First Army were placed temporarily under the G.O.C. IV. Corps, and attached to the artillery of the 8th Division.

² On the 18th May further reinforcements of three batteries (eleven guns) of French 75-mm. were sent by General Foch to co-operate with the British south of the La Bassée canal. These eleven guns were reduced to three by the 22nd May, by which time six had burst and two were worn out. The cause of the bursts was faulty ammunition, and also the excessive rate of fire by which the guns became so hot that the high explosive shell burst in the gun.

reasonably certain. Both the 2nd and 7th Divisions 14 May. replied that they were satisfied with the results of the bombardment, though the former mentioned that the wet state of the ground might prove a serious obstacle. The reply of the Meerut Division was not so confident. Lieut.-General Sir C. A. Anderson reported: "I do not consider sufficient damage has been done to ensure success of the assault to-night, nor from the artillery reports is it likely to be completed in time. As regards wire cutting, we have not yet begun, as the batteries detailed for it had to shift their positions. The wire cutting will be done to-day." In the circumstances, General Haig decided, with the sanction of Sir John French, to postpone the assault for 24 hours, till the night of the 15th/16th; and the necessary orders were sent out to corps commanders concerned at 3.30 P.M. The bombardment of 36 hours originally intended was thus prolonged over a period of 60 hours.

The morning of the 15th, Saturday, brought bright sunshine, an improvement that continued throughout the day. At nightfall the assaulting brigades moved up to the four lines of breastworks from which they were to advance. The deliberateness of the artillery preparation, which, owing to the shortage of heavy guns and ammunition, was only carried out on the actual frontage of attack in the 2nd and Meerut Divisions, and on only a slightly wider frontage in the 7th Division, had necessarily discounted the factor of surprise. Nevertheless, it was hoped to obtain some of the advantages of an unexpected attack by misleading the enemy as to the hour of the assault. For this purpose feints were made during the 14th and 15th. Thus on the 14th there were three bombardments of three minutes by all 4.5-inch, 5-inch and 6-inch howitzers; then two minutes dead silence, followed by two minutes' fire of all 18-pdr. and 13-pdr. batteries, with heavy rifle fire on the German first and second lines. On the 15th, at 10 A.M. and 3 P.M. the bombardment quickened up for five minutes, and then suddenly stopped. The infantry in the front breastworks then cheered as if an assault was intended, and a burst of shrapnel was opened on the German front trenches on the chance of their being manned.

THE NIGHT ASSAULT OF THE 2ND AND THE MEERUT
DIVISIONS, 11.30 P.M. 15TH MAY

Sketch 6.

The assault of the 2nd Division (Major-General H. S. Horne), on a similar frontage, 1,300 yards, to that of the 1st Division on the 9th May, was to be carried out by the 6th (Br.-General R. Fanshawe) and 5th (Br.-General A. A. Chichester) Brigades, with the 4th (Guards) Brigade in support.¹ The Meerut Division (Lieut.-General Sir C. A. Anderson) was to assist by a simultaneous attack on a frontage of 400 yards on the immediate left of the 5th Brigade, the Garhwal Brigade (Br.-General C. G. Blackader) in front line, the Sirhind Brigade² in support, and the Bareilly Brigade (Br.-General W. M. Southey) at Croix Barbée in reserve. The total strength of the three brigades detailed for the first assault in this first British night attack of the war³ was about 10,000 infantry.⁴

The sky was overcast, and it was quite dark—the moon being barely thirty-six hours old—when at 11.30 P.M. on the 15th May the lines of half companies of the leading battalions began to move out as quietly as possible from the front breastwork. As a distinguishing mark each man wore a white patch on his chest and back. Just beyond the breastwork and parallel to it was a dyke, 12 feet wide, which contained 4 feet of water. This obstacle the troops crossed by means of light bridges and, moving out into No Man's Land, they lay down in line. The flat ground between them and the Germans, three hundred yards away, was mostly fallow, covered by a crop of weeds and grass a foot high; but in places furrows pointing directly ahead to the enemy trench gave a good guide as to direction.

The attack of the 6th Brigade on the right was entirely successful. Advancing in silence at a walk with bayonets fixed,⁵ the leading half companies almost reached the

¹ For 2nd Division instructions and orders see Appendices 11 & 12.

² The Sirhind Brigade (Br.-General W. G. Walker) belonged to the Lahore Division, but had temporarily replaced the Dehra Dun Brigade, which had suffered severely on the 9th May at the Battle of Aubers Ridge.

³ The German *Fifth Army* (German Crown Prince) had made a night attack against the French Third Army (General Sarrail) to the west and south-west of Verdun on the 9th/10th September 1914, with very disastrous results to itself.

⁴ They were faced by the *55th Regiment* which had two battalions in the front and support trenches, and the remaining battalion in reserve, making 2,200 men in all, with a large number of machine guns.

⁵ 1/7th King's (Lieut.-Colonel W. H. Stott), 1/Royal Berkshire (Major C. S. Hill) and 1/K.R.R.C. (Major G. C. Shakerley) formed the leading lines, each battalion on a frontage of 200 yards with a section of the 11th Field Company R.E. to assist it.

ASSAULT OF 2ND AND MEERUT DIVISIONS 57

enemy breastwork before a shot was fired, and secured it ^{15/16} without serious opposition, most of the Germans running ^{May.} back up the main communication trench past the Ferme du Bois. Soon afterwards the pre-arranged signal, the lighting up of two motor head-lamps on the German parapet, indicated to brigade headquarters that the supporting companies had passed through and reached the German support trench. There these companies halted and consolidated, to be ready at daybreak to continue the attack. The losses had been small, but included Major Shakerley, commanding the 1/K.R.R.C., mortally wounded in leading the advance.

Unfortunately the 5th Brigade and the Garhwal Brigade had no chance of surprise. By corps order, the Lahore Division, northwards of the front of attack, was "to assist with rifle and machine-gun fire throughout the "bombardment" in order to mislead the enemy. The battalions of the Jullundur Brigade had in consequence been directed to open fire in controlled bursts of five minutes duration, at 8.45 P.M., 9.30 P.M., 10 P.M. and 10.30 P.M. The effect of this abnormal procedure was to put the Germans near the Port Arthur—La Bassée road on the alert. By means of light-balls they detected the parties laying the light bridges over the dyke, and when at 11.30 P.M., the British field batteries lifted, the enemy opened heavy machine-gun and rifle fire in anticipation of an attack. When the assaulting battalions of the 5th and Garhwal Brigades¹ rose to advance, this fire raked them from flank to flank. In a moment too No Man's Land was illuminated by the enemy who used a searchlight in addition to light-ball grenades and flares, whilst rocket signals brought assistance from the German artillery. The shell fire broke some of the bridges over the dyke and prevented the immediate advance of the supporting lines.

Only the right half of the Inniskilling Fusilier attack, that nearest the 6th Brigade, was able to reach the German front trench. Br.-General Chichester endeavoured to exploit the success of this battalion by pushing forward the 2/Oxfordshire to support it, and 10 platoons were

¹ The 5th Brigade had the 2/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel C. A. Wilding) and 2/Worcestershire (Major G. C. Lambton) in front; the Garhwal Brigade, the 2/Leicestershire (Lieut.-Colonel H. Gordon) and 39th Garhwal Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel D. H. Drake-Brockman). The two battalions of the last named unit had been combined to form one after Neuve Chapelle. Each front line battalion had 3 platoons of its supporting battalion as a carrying party with shovels, sandbags, etc.

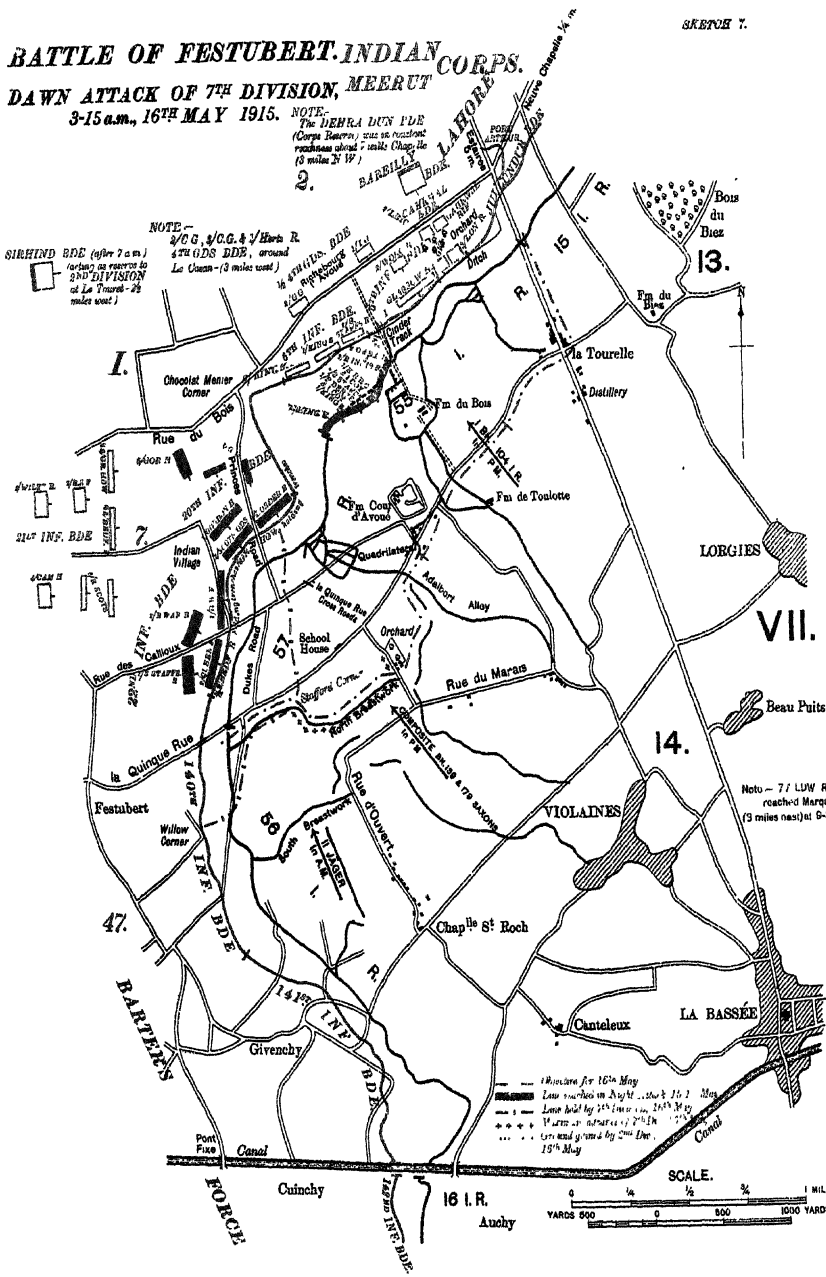
16 May. gradually sent up. An attempt to bomb up the German trenches northwards was made; but the enemy rapidly improvised a trench block on this side and the attempt was of no avail.¹

When about 12.45 A.M. (16th May) the reports of the results of the assault were received at I. and Indian Corps headquarters, instructions were issued, as previously arranged, for a further effort to be made at 3.15 A.M., after half an hour's bombardment, in conjunction with the dawn attack of the 7th Division further south. An attempt was made to carry this out, but the interval was too long; the enemy with three hours in which to reorganize, had developed a new position by the conversion of communication trenches opposite the successful battalions of the 6th Brigade. Owing to fire from these and from the uncaptured front trenches on either flank, the supporting battalions of the brigade—the 1/King's (Lieut.-Colonel C. J. Steavenson) and 2/South Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel P. C. L. Routledge)—in the original British breast-work were unable to reach the new front line, still less continue past it. In the Garhwal Brigade, which was back at its starting point, two fresh battalions, the 1/3rd London (Lieut.-Colonel A. A. Howell) and 2/3rd Gurkha Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel V. A. Ormsby), were put in, but the leading lines at once lost so heavily that the remainder were held back. The advance of the 5th Brigade, owing to necessary reorganization after its heavy losses, could not begin at the hour named. Thus the dawn attack of the 2nd and Meerut Divisions, which should have coincided with that of the 7th Division, failed to develop and the situation of the two divisions remained unchanged.

On receipt of the report of the paralysis of the offensive in this sector, General Haig, at 5.40 A.M., gave orders that the left of the position gained by the 6th Brigade, and part of the 5th, should now be regarded as the left boundary of the offensive front, the troops north of it remaining on the defensive; and he directed the transfer of the Sirhind Brigade, which had been in support of the Garhwal, southwards to a position behind the 2nd Division.

¹ On this day, mostly in this attack, the 2/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers lost 19 officers and 680 other ranks; the 2/Worcestershire, 6 and 805; the 2/Leicestershire, 8 and 800; the 2/Oxfordshire, 20 and 875; and the 39th Garhwal Rifles 154 of all ranks.

Ordnance Survey, 1928



THE DAWN ASSAULT OF THE 7TH DIVISION,
3.15 A.M., 16TH MAY

The dawn assault of the 7th Division ¹ (Major-General **Sketch 7.** H. de la P. Gough) had more success. The artillery bombardment had followed the same general lines as that in the sector of the 2nd Division; but whereas the actual assault frontage of the division was 850 yards, the German parapet, in order to prevent enfilade fire, was to be destroyed for a further 350 yards to the south and 400 yards to the north, making in all a frontage of 1,600 yards to be bombarded.²

At 2.45 A.M. (Sunday the 16th May) the bombardment on the German front defences was increased and continued at its maximum till 3.15 A.M., the hour of the infantry assault. Six guns, with old motor tyres on the wheels to deaden the sound of movement, had been brought forward overnight into emplacements prepared in the British front breastwork. These guns fired high explosive shell at the German parapet with considerable success during this period.³

In the course of the night the 22nd (Br.-General S. T. B. Lawford) and 20th (Br.-General F. J. Heyworth) Brigades had been moved up into their assembly positions, and the 21st Brigade (Br.-General H. E. Watts) withdrawn from the front line into reserve. The 22nd Brigade occupied a frontage of 400 yards athwart the Rue des Cailloux, and the 20th at an interval from it a frontage of 350 yards astride Princes Road. The initial objective was the German front breastwork, 80 to 200 yards away,⁴ and then a line known

¹ For operation order see Appendix 13.

² The German *57th Regiment* defended the 850 yards assault frontage of the 7th Division. This regiment held 2,000 yards between the Ferme Cour d'Avoué and Festubert with one battalion in the front line, one battalion in support, about La Quinque Rue and the Rue du Marais, its third battalion in rest billets about Violaines and La Bassée. The actual front trench facing the two assaulting brigades of the 7th Division was thus defended by less than two companies of infantry.

³ Four 13-pdrs. of T and U Batteries R.H.A., and two 18-pdrs. of the 12th Battery R.F.A.

⁴ The two lines were in places so close together that artillery bombardment up to the last moment was an operation requiring great care. Yet in the final phase, when during an H.E. bombardment by 18-pdrs. the assaulting infantry climbed out of their trenches and lay down just beyond them to await the moment of assault, no casualties from British fire were reported, except in battalions of the 20th Brigade (see below) which advanced 5 minutes before zero hour.

16 May. as "North Breastwork",¹ entailing a further advance of a thousand yards. Two rocket guns, placed in the front trench, were to signal by a pre-arranged code the success or failure of the brigade assaults, in order to give immediate information to the artillery and higher commands in the event of telephonic communication breaking down.

The assault of the 22nd Brigade was led by the 2/Queen's and 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers. As they were going over the parapet at 3.15 A.M., it was just light enough to see, and whilst they were in No Man's Land the enemy opened heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. As there was no covering fire to check him, he inflicted severe casualties. The R. Welch Fusiliers, in spite of Lieut.-Colonel R. E. P. Gabbett being killed and his second-in-command severely wounded, reached and rushed the German front trench, and pressed on. The Queen's, on the outer and more exposed flank, were raked by machine guns after crossing the British parapet, and the two leading companies were shot down. Their commanding officer, Major H. R. Bottomley, thereupon suspended the advance for fifteen minutes' further bombardment with lyddite. He then led forward the supporting companies, and, although he himself was killed, they stormed the German breastworks, bombers clearing it for a further 300 yards to the southward. Supported by the 1/South Staffordshire, which at once began working up on the right, the Queen's continued to advance, and at 6 A.M. reached their objective, North Breastwork. The R. Welch Fusiliers,² now under Captain C. Stockwell, had further to go; and, though there was little resistance in the front trenches, they met with considerable opposition from the support line. Overcoming this, the enemy running off southward pursued by bombers, they then had to pass through an artillery barrage. It was not until nearly 6.30 A.M. that, with some of the 2/Scots Guards of the 20th Brigade on their left and with 1½ companies of the 2/R. Warwickshire (Lieut.-Colonel V. R. Pigott) in support—and after having swum a deep dyke—they reached the Orchard abreast of the Queen's. The bombers of the South Staffordshire, now on the right, had proceeded to work southwards up the network of trenches in rear of the German position facing Festubert.

¹ This "North Breastwork" (see Sketch 7) turned out to be a low sandbag parapet without any trench.

² Mainly the right half battalion; part of the left pushed ahead more to the left, and as will be seen, joined up with the 2/Scots Guards.

Clearing the enemy out of more than a quarter of mile of 16 May. it, they established the line from "Stafford Corner" back to the German front breastwork,¹ while two companies of the battalion, moving on the left rear of the bombing parties, secured the line of the road near "Stafford Corner". Thus by 7 A.M. the 22nd Brigade had completely gained its objective; but both the Queen's and the R. Welch Fusiliers were too weak² to push any further, and the check to the advance of the 20th Brigade had left them with their left flank badly exposed. As it turned out, there was no further organized opposition in front of the 22nd Brigade, for the enemy had despatched his small local reserves to oppose the 2nd Division.

A different fate befell the assault of the 20th Brigade, led by the 2/Scots Guards (Lieut.-Colonel A. B. E. Cator) and 2/Border Regiment (Lieut.-Colonel L. I. Wood). The leading companies were ordered to move to the assault at 8.10 A.M. in order to get across No Man's Land under cover of the last five minutes of the bombardment; but the first lines, particularly in the Border Regiment, pressed on towards the German parapet without waiting for the end of the bombardment, and suffered considerable loss from British H.E. shell.

Nevertheless the German front defences were carried. Then the further advance of the Border Regiment was checked by a deep dyke and the enfilade fire of the Germans in the "Quadrilateral"—a strong combination of trenches in the unassaulted sector between the 7th and 2nd Divisions—Lieut.-Colonel Wood and his second-in-command being killed. Bombing failed to dislodge the opposition, but the Scots Guards pressed on, and shortly after managed to secure a party of the 1/R. Welch Fusiliers, which losing touch had drifted over to their sector, to cover their unprotected left. Thus assisted, the two leading companies of the Scots Guards eventually reached their objective, the road adjacent to the Orchard, and began to consolidate. The right company, after suffering many casualties, was soon compelled to withdraw by the fire

¹ During these operations, C.-S.-M. F. Barter, Special Reserve, attached 1/R. Welch Fusiliers, with eight bombers of the brigade bombing company (the formation of these companies was explained in "1915" Vol. I. p. 95 f.n.) captured 500 yards of trench with 8 officers and 102 men, and subsequently cut the leads of 11 mines. He received the V.C.

² On the 16th May, the 2/Queen's lost 21 officers and 433 other ranks out of 22 and 773, and the 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers 19 officers and 559 other ranks out of 24 and 806.

16 May. of the British guns falling on its position. The left, F Company, and the R. Welch Fusilier party, after receiving heavy enfilade machine-gun fire from Adalbert Alley,¹ were counter-attacked from left front and flank. The Welch Fusiliers managed to get away, but F Company stood its ground, and was overwhelmed, the sole survivors, one officer and 3 other ranks, being taken prisoner.² The German counter-attack continued to make progress, until it came into collision with the support company of the Scots Guards which, with two machine guns, swung round into a shallow disused trench to face the onslaught. After a short fight the enemy was forced to retire to Adalbert Alley. Attempts by the Scots Guards to get forward against this new position during the morning were of no avail; the men were shot almost directly they rose, and the survivors only managed to return to the shallow trench, where they remained, by wading along the deep dykes up to their chests in water. As a general result, by 9 A.M., though the 22nd Brigade had made an advance of some six hundred yards, the right of the 20th Brigade was little more than over the German front breastwork, and its left was unable to progress beyond that line; the 6th Brigade and part of the 5th were in and beyond the German front; the attack of the Garhwal Brigade and the left of the 5th had failed. The original gap between the attacks of the 7th and 2nd Divisions had been only slightly diminished; whilst the precision of the German artillery fire on the supports and reserves had broken the cohesion and force of the British attack.

¹ This communication trench led up from the Rue du Marais across La Quinque Rue and the Rue des Cailloux to a point in the German front trench 400 yards north of Princes Road. It was solidly built with sand-bag breastworks, 4 feet high on either side, and frequent traverses, so that, if necessary, it could be rapidly turned into a fire position. It was to play an important part in the fighting.

The counter-attackers were two companies of the 57th Regiment, the local reserves on the front of the 22nd Brigade, who were moving up Adalbert Alley to reinforce the Quadrilateral at the time, and were thus, accidentally, in a position to enfilade the attack of the 20th Brigade.

² A medley of bodies, 80 Scots Guards and as many Germans were found on the ground when it was recaptured next day.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT (*concluded*)

THE SECOND PHASE AND THE CLOSE OF THE OPERATIONS, 16TH-27TH MAY 1915

(Sketches A, 7, 8, 9, 10)

PROGRESS OF THE FIGHTING DURING THE 16TH MAY

BETWEEN 9 and 9.30 A.M. General Monro, commanding the **Sketch 7.** I. Corps, visited the headquarters of both the 2nd and 7th Divisions. Only partial success having been achieved in their two assaults, the gap between the divisions which should have been closed by their convergent advance still existed, and in it were strong German defences. He decided therefore, in accordance with a message previously received (at 5.40 A.M.) from the First Army, to direct the next efforts to the purpose of joining up the two divisions. On the front, therefore, of the 2nd Division, the 6th Brigade was to work south-eastwards towards the Ferme Cour D'Avoué; the 7th Division was to organize an attack north-eastwards, astride the Rue des Cailloux.

The operations were to begin at 10 A.M., but in the 6th Brigade, owing to constant shelling of the original front line and all communication trenches and roads, and to a cross fire of machine guns and rifles on No Man's Land, it was found impossible to get up sufficient men or ammunition for a forward movement.¹ In the 7th Division the 1/Grenadier Guards (Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Corkran) of the 20th Brigade, sent to reinforce the Scots Guards, was able to cross No Man's Land about 10 A.M. by a communication trench under construction by the 1/6th Gordon Highlanders, although it was already nearly blocked by wounded.

¹ Lance-Corporal J. Tombs, 1/King's (6th Brigade) rescued four wounded men under heavy fire on this day and was awarded the V.C.

16 May. After a consultation between the two battalion commanders, an attack was set in motion which cleared by bombing three hundred yards of communication trench towards the Quadrilateral, and took a number of prisoners; but an advance over the open was held up at once with heavy losses. A further attempt at 2.30 P.M. by the Grenadiers, assisted by the 1/8th Royal Scots sent up by the 22nd Brigade, also made no progress, the German defences between the 7th and 2nd Divisions not having been sufficiently shelled.

Whilst these unsuccessful efforts were being made in the centre to join the inner flanks of the two divisions, the 22nd Brigade, on the right, not only maintained its gains, but extended them. The bombers of the 1/South Staffordshire, assisted by part of the brigade bombing company, added to their gains by taking four hundred yards of German front line southwards down to Willow Corner, opposite the front of the 47th Division, capturing in all eight hundred yards of trench¹ and three officers and 194 men. On the left flank of the 22nd Brigade, however, at the northern end of North Breastwork, the Orchard and the farm buildings at its edge surrounded by a dyke waist-deep in water, finally remained in the enemy's hands. All attempts to turn him out failed, in spite of the reinforcement of the bombers by a trench mortar battery and a hundred men of the 1/7th London (47th Division).² By evening the position along North Breastwork grew untenable. It was not bullet-proof, and was enfiladed by the German batteries about Lorgies, so that its defenders suffered considerable and continuous losses. There were no signs of an advance by the 20th Brigade to cover the exposed left flank, so, at 7.30 P.M., Captain Stockwell, commanding R. Welch Fusiliers and the senior officer on the spot, ordered a withdrawal behind La Quinque Rue. This decision was subsequently approved by his brigadier. The Queen's, on the right of the Fusiliers, reduced to about two hundred men, conformed to the retirement; but the South Staffordshire continued to hold the front they had gained, and their left at Stafford Corner connected with the 1/8th Royal Scots and the 1/Grenadiers, whose line ran nearly

¹ To join up with this, a working party of 600 men of the 1/6th London (47th Division) was detailed to make a communication trench—or rather breastwork, as water was reached at two feet—across No Man's Land during the night.

² The battalion was attached to the 22nd Brigade, 7th Division, from the 16th to the 19th May.

**THE NEW GERMAN LINE, & THE
OPERATIONS ON 17TH MAY 1915.**

17TH MAY 1915.

**INDIAN
CORPS.**

SKETCH 3

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

25-0-1217E. as 20 (West Main, 2nd S. W.)

2. The second part of the paper discusses the impact of the 1997 Asian financial crisis on the performance of the Asian stock markets. The results show that the Asian stock markets experienced a significant decline in performance during the crisis, with the average return of the Asian stock markets falling from 12.5% in 1996 to -15.5% in 1997. The results also show that the Asian stock markets experienced a significant increase in volatility during the crisis, with the average volatility of the Asian stock markets increasing from 1.5% in 1996 to 3.5% in 1997.

3. The following are the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various committees of the Board of Directors:

2-12-62 - C U 416 614th GDS, BDE.

உதவி செய்கிறேன்.
உதவி செய்கிறேன்.

A

13.

LORGIES

VII.

14.

VIOLAINES

Chap^{lle} St. Roch

LA BASSÉE

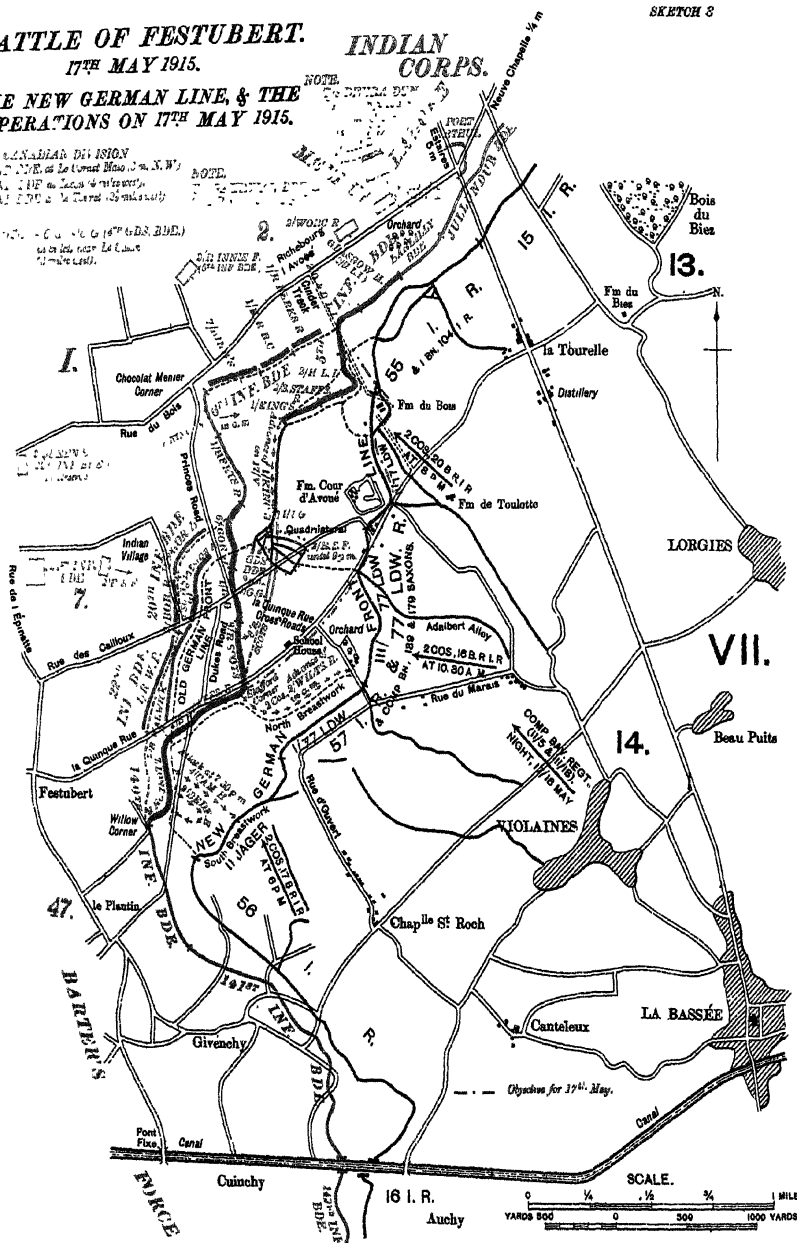
FORCE

Quinchy

16 L. R.

SCALE.

Ordinance Survey 1928



due north from this point. During the night the Queen's, 16 May. Border Regiment and R. Welch Fusiliers were further withdrawn to or behind the old front line.¹

THE ATTACKS OF THE 7TH AND 2ND DIVISIONS TO CLOSE THE GAP IN THEIR FRONT, AND THE CONTINUATION OF THE FORWARD MOVEMENT ON THE 17TH AND 18TH MAY.

During the afternoon of the 16th May, General Haig had visited the headquarters of the Indian Corps at Lestrem, 2nd Division at Lacouture, 7th Division at Le Hamel, and I. Corps at Essars, when the commanders gave him a general summary of the situation on their respective fronts as far as it was known to them. From these reports, General Haig inferred that a further advance from the left of the battle front towards the Ferme Cour d'Avoué and the Ferme du Bois, would be difficult owing to constant enemy artillery fire from about Lorgies and Beau Puits, which the British counter-batteries were unable to neutralize. On the other hand, it seemed that a more southerly line of advance from the right wing near Festubert would encounter less resistance. The commander of the First Army decided to act accordingly, and on the proposed change being referred to G.H.Q. it was sanctioned by Sir John French. He gave General Haig full liberty to modify his plan as he thought best, bearing in mind, however, "that the main object to aim at for the present is to continue relentlessly to wear down the enemy by exhaustion and prevent him from detaching troops to oppose the French".²

The First Army orders for the following day were issued in message form at 11.45 P.M. The offensive of the I. Corps only was to be continued, the time being left to the G.O.C., General Monro, to fix. The primary object was to close the gap between the 7th and 2nd Divisions and secure a line from Festubert along La Quinque Rue to the Ferme Cour d'Avoué. Once this line was gained, a defensive left flank was to be established on the front Ferme Cour d'Avoué—Ferme du Bois—Cinder Track (inclusive), and thence to the original British front. Sketch 8.

The I. Corps ordered that the artillery bombardment should begin as early as possible, and that the results should be reported at 7 A.M. The infantry battalions were warned

¹ The 22nd Brigade lost 64 officers and 1,608 other ranks.

² Letter from G.H.Q. to General Haig, dated 11.30 P.M. 17th May, confirming conversation of the previous day.

16 May. that no advance would take place before 8 A.M. This hour, in reality, left them little time for adequate preparation.

The rest of the First Army, that is to say, the Indian and IV. Corps, to the north of the battle front, and Barter's Force (47th and 1st Divisions) to the south, were to remain on the defensive. Subsequent operations were to be directed with a general idea of advancing the right to a line Givenchy — Chapelle St. Roch — Rue d'Ouvert. The Canadian Division and the Sirhind Brigade were left in Army reserve, but the former was directed to have one brigade (3rd) ready to support the I. Corps, and the others were to be closed up behind it.

During the night, however, the Germans had begun a systematic withdrawal between "South Breastwork" and Ferme du Bois to a new line some three-quarters of a mile in rear, which remained unknown to the British for several days.¹ In consequence, the attacks between these localities struck only small rear guards, and parties who had not received orders or had been unable to get away.

The bombardment of the Quadrilateral and other trenches still held by the Germans between the inner flanks of the 7th and 2nd Divisions, was begun at 2.45 A.M. on the 17th. It was accurate and successful, although low clouds stopped air work for the greater part of the day,² the result being in great measure due to the fact that the bombardment of the previous afternoon had enabled the targets to be carefully registered. So accurate was it, that by 7 A.M. the front trenches had been thoroughly devastated, and though the Germans actually had orders to retire, they were unable to leave the Quadrilateral. Extemporized white flags now appeared all along the front bombarded, and shortly afterwards a number of Germans got up and ran across unarmed towards the trench of the 1/7th King's (Liverpool), east of Chocolat Menier Corner. Salvoes of shell from the German batteries about Lorgies at once burst among them,³ and these, in addition to the fire from the

¹ See Note II. at end of Chapter.

² It was carried out by five howitzer and three field batteries of the 2nd and 7th Divisions, assisted by three 9.2-inch howitzers of No. 1 Group H.A.R. For the purpose No. 6 Ammunition Park of G.H.Q. reserve, with 2,240 rounds of 4.5-inch howitzer lyddite, was put at the disposal of the First Army.

³ The British accounts suggest that the German batteries fired on these troops to prevent them from surrendering; but, in view of the orders for the withdrawal to a new line, it is probable that the German artillery believed these trenches to have been evacuated, and thought it was firing at British troops.

British batteries, which could not be stopped, practically annihilated them. Nevertheless, shortly afterwards more Germans, some 450 in all, rose and began to run towards the British line. The fire on these was less heavy, and the majority reached the British trenches and surrendered.¹

At 6.45 A.M. General Monro, commanding the I. Corps, had enquired by telephone whether the 2nd and 7th Divisions considered the infantry would be ready to attack at 8 A.M. The 2nd Division, whose main attack was to be made by the 6th Brigade, replied in the affirmative; but the 7th Division, in which the 21st Brigade, passing through the 20th, was to lead, was rather doubtful. The time of assault was therefore postponed first until 9 A.M. and then until 10.30 A.M.; but when, at 8.45 A.M., reports arrived that some of the Germans had surrendered and that the resistance of the others appeared to be weakening, it was decided to deliver the assault at 9.30 A.M. The notification of these alterations to the fighting troops through the divisional and brigade staffs naturally took time, and in the end, as will be seen, the advance was not simultaneous.

The early morning had been cloudy; one air message, and one only, came in, furnished by No. 16 Squadron. An aviator had noticed a new German trench running from the houses south of Ferme Cour d'Avoué, past the back of the farm to Ferme du Bois and thence to the Cinder Track. Fifty yards behind it was another. Both gave him "the impression of a trench hastily and irregularly dug", and perhaps on that account, no notice was taken of the message and no attempt made to discover whether the new line extended southwards.² At 8 A.M. rain began to fall and continued at intervals throughout the day, rendering further air work, including the bombing programme, impossible; turning the trenches and shell craters into mudholes; and making movement and communications very difficult. By 9 A.M. most of the Germans in the trenches north-west of the Rue des Cailloux between the 7th and 2nd Divisions had either surrendered or withdrawn. Consequently, the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel J. H. W. Pollard), supported by the 2/Green Howards (Major T. W. Stansfeld), of the 21st Brigade (Br.-General

¹ They consisted chiefly of men of the 104th (*Saxon*) and 139th (*Saxon*) *Regiments*, from each of which two companies had come by rail from Pérenchies, opposite Armentières, from the *XIX. Corps*, the previous evening, and of the 57th *Regiment*, the original defenders of this sector of the front defences.

² The message is in the R.F.C. files, but not in any other.

17 May. H. E. Watts), moving forward astride and north of the Rue des Cailloux met with trifling opposition and saw only a few Germans, whom they made prisoners. By 10.15 A.M. they had gained possession of the entire Quadrilateral, and subsequently made some ground to the left.

The advance of the 6th Brigade, immediately north of the 21st, was carried out by the 1/King's (Lieut.-Colonel C. J. Steavenson) and the 2/South Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel P. C. L. Routledge, who was killed on this day), the 2/Highland L.I. (Captain A. W. D. Gaussen, also killed on this day), co-operating on the left. Starting thirty minutes late, at 10 A.M., owing to delay in the transmission of the alteration of time of attack between corps headquarters and the battalions, the right of the King's was able to join up with the R. Scots Fusiliers. The Highland L.I., however, were checked at the outset, and the left of the King's and the South Staffordshire, after getting within three hundred yards of Ferme Cour d'Avoué, met such heavy fire from the left flank that they were completely held up.¹ The divisional artillery which attempted to assist them by a renewed bombardment unfortunately occasioned a number of casualties among the R. Scots Fusiliers, who were now beginning to advance from the Quadrilateral; and at the moment the source of the fire which caused these losses could not be ascertained.

The first reports of the successful forward movement by both the 2nd and 7th Divisions led General Haig at 11.30 A.M. to send the following instructions to I. Corps headquarters: "There are signs of the enemy's resistance breaking down.² Consolidate the front along La Quinque Rue—Ferme Cour d'Avoué—Ferme du Bois—Cinder Track. Brigadiers on the spot will take the opportunity of pressing on: 7th Division against Chapelle St. Roch—Canteleux—Givenchy; 2nd Division on Rue du Marais." At the same time, he placed the 3rd Canadian Brigade (Br.-General R. E. W. Turner), about Le Touret (2½ miles west of Chocolat Menier Corner), at the disposal of the I. Corps. The Indian Corps was to assist by gradually taking over the 5th Brigade front as far as the Cinder Track, thereby freeing that brigade to join in the offensive.

¹ The fire actually came from the new German positions, unknown to the British, behind and enclosing the farm. The farm had been evacuated by the enemy, "owing to the intensity of the British artillery fire, which had reduced the place to ruins". "Regt. No. 124", p. 156.

² For the precarious situation of the enemy, according to his own account, see Note II. at end of Chapter.

The Sirhind Brigade (Br.-General W. G. Walker) in Army reserve was to be employed, when required, to form a defensive flank connecting the left flank of the 2nd Division, as it advanced, with the front of the Indian Corps at the Cinder Track. 17 May.

General Haig then motored to the headquarters of the I. Corps and 2nd and 7th Divisions. He impressed on the commanders the importance of establishing a strong front along La Quinque Rue before making a further advance in force, and told them that by instructions from Sir John French the ultimate objective of the First Army was no longer Aubers ridge, but La Bassée and the railway "Triangle", so as to get access to the south of the canal. The further operations of the I. Corps would therefore be directed with Chapelle St. Roch and Violaines as primary objectives.

Fresh efforts to get forward were accordingly made by the 7th and 2nd Divisions independently, the attack of the former being ordered to begin at 2 P.M., and the latter at 3 P.M. They met with no success.

The first attack of the 21st Brigade eastwards towards La Quinque Rue between the Orchard and the cross roads south of Ferme Cour d'Avoué, began hopefully. The 2/Wiltshire on the right, thanks to the preliminary work of two companies in the forenoon, occupied North Breastwork gained by the R. Welch Fusiliers on the previous day; but, like them, they had to abandon it on account of the heavy enfilade fire from the unsuspected new German line, and return to the 7th Division line. The R. Scots Fusiliers again came into the zone of fire of the 2nd Division artillery, which was preparing for the advance of the 6th Brigade at 3 P.M., and sustained heavy casualties and although they gained touch with the 6th Brigade could not get forward.¹ The attack of the 5th and 6th Brigades on the left towards Ferme Cour d'Avoué could not be organized in time to begin at 3 P.M. after half an hour's bombardment; it was abandoned until it could be supported by an advance of the 4th (Guards) Brigade north-eastward from the Quadrilateral.

¹ It was not until subsequent investigation had been made that the reason for the check of both morning and afternoon attacks of the R. Scots Fusiliers—the fire of British guns—became known. The incident—as General Horne (commanding the 2nd Division, himself an artillery officer of much regimental experience) wrote on 30th May 1915 to the 7th Division—showed the great difficulties of co-ordinating the action of artillery on a wide front. At the time there was no staff for the purpose. See f.n. 3, p. 73.

17 May. The movement of this Guards brigade, under Br.-General Lord Cavan, from Le Touret, three miles behind the front, could not be begun until 5 P.M.; and then it found the way blocked by the 7th Division reserves. As a result of shell fire and the rain which had fallen at intervals all day, the ground, particularly No Man's Land and the old German defences, was a quagmire; thus it was 8 P.M. before the 2/Grenadier Guards (Lieut.-Colonel W. R. A. Smith) and 1/Irish Guards (Lieut.-Colonel J. F. Trefusis), with the 1/Hertfordshire (Lieut.-Colonel Viscount Hampden) in support, arrived at the intersection of Princes Road with the Rue des Cailloux. With darkness coming on, the battalions were able to do little more than reach the line held by the 21st Brigade, where they got in touch with the 1/Grenadier Guards (20th Brigade) on the right—so that the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the regiment were side by side for the first time in the war—and with the 1/King's (6th Brigade) on the left. Unmolested by the Germans,¹ they entrenched this line as best they could with their portable implements, the tools and stores sent up for this purpose by the 4th (Guards) Brigade at 9 P.M., not coming to hand.

On the extreme right, as part of the general forward movement, the 2/Bedfordshire (Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Onslow) and the 1/4th Cameron Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel A. Fraser, killed on this day) of the 21st Brigade, attacked south-eastwards at 7.30 P.M. to capture South Breastwork.² There had been no time for reconnaissance and the four hundred yards of ground that had to be crossed could only be examined from the front line. With grass twelve inches high, it looked easy going and without obstacles, but it proved unfavourable to movement, being intersected by a number of broad dykes in which some men were drowned; and, unfortunately, the few Germans who had been defending the breastwork had been reinforced an hour or so earlier by two companies. Nevertheless, on the left, a party of some two hundred Camerons overcame all obstacles and actually reached and entered the breastwork near the sharp bend at the north end of Rue d'Ouvert. The first attempt of the Bedfordshire failed, although their bombers made a little ground on the right; a second, undertaken at 3 A.M. on the 18th, was equally unsuccessful. Before that hour the Camerons, who had lost all their

¹ The enemy was equally busy improving his new position which he had occupied during the day. See Note II. at end of Chapter.

² This was in the new German line.

BATTLE OF FESTUBERT.

18TH MAY 1915.

SKETCH 9

NOTE—

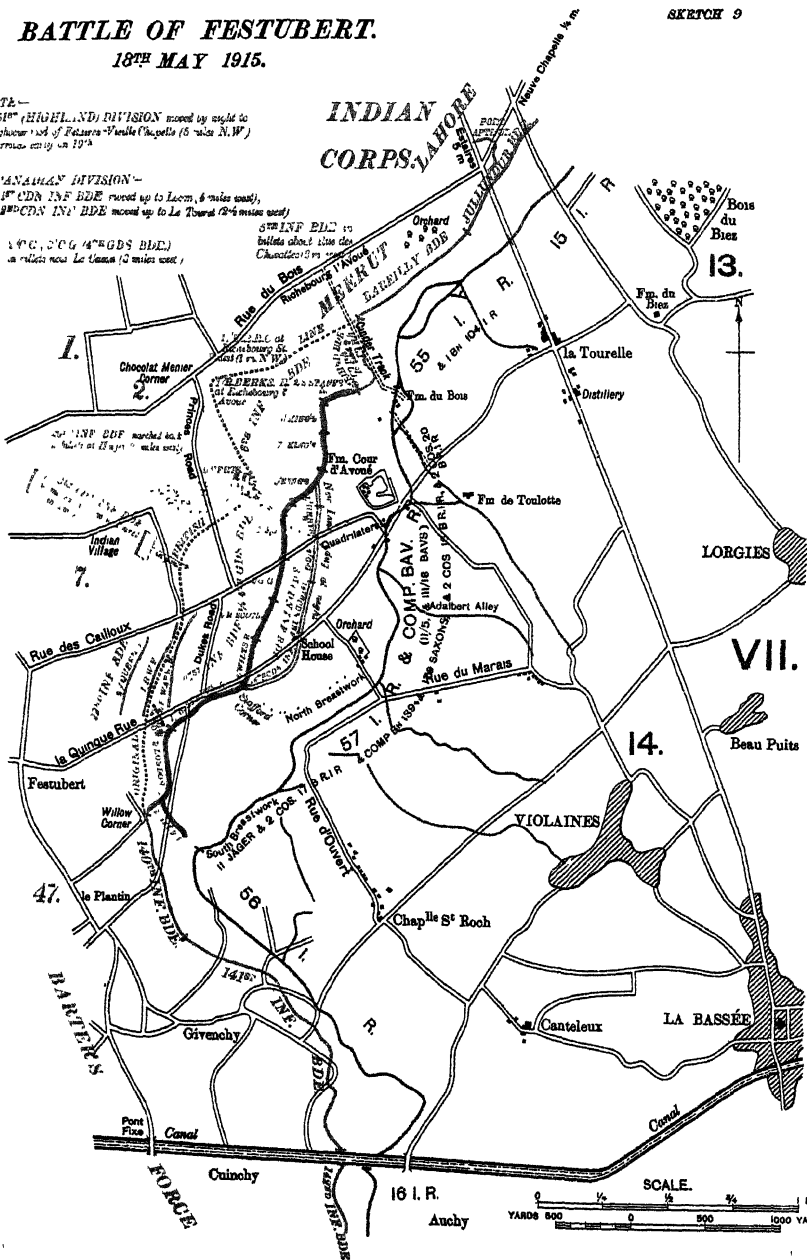
61ST (HIGHLAND) DIVISION moved by night to positions west of Festubert-Villers (Capelle) (5 miles N.W.) & arrived on 19TH.

1ST CANADIAN DIVISION—

1ST CDB INF BDE moved up to Locon (6 miles west).

2ND CDB INF BDE moved up to La Tourelle (2½ miles west).

1ST C. C. G. (4TH GDS BDE) in action near Le Thieu (2 miles west).



hand-grenades in crossing the dykes, had been compelled by bombing counter-attacks made from the flanks to relinquish their conquest and retire along the dykes which served them as communication trenches.¹ 18 May.

Rain fell steadily to the great discomfort of the troops throughout the night of the 17th/18th, which passed uneventfully apart from the movements in the 21st Brigade just narrated. The Indian Corps extended further to its right, the Barcilly and Sirhind Brigades taking over the trenches of the 5th Brigade. Sketch 9.

It was intended, in conformity with a First Army message sent at 7.35 P.M. on the 17th, to renew the advance on La Quinque Rue that had been held up by darkness on the evening of that day. The artillery bombardment of the Orchard, Cour d'Avoué and buildings south of it, was to begin as soon as it was sufficiently light for accurate observation; and advantage was to be taken of any weakening of the enemy in front to advance under cover of the bombardment. Owing to rain and mist, however, accurate observation was not practicable in the early morning hours, and the bombardment was delayed; so much so that at 8.25 A.M. it was decided to postpone the infantry attack, which had been timed for 9 A.M.

During the morning the weather began to clear, and the mist to disperse. Sir John French who visited General Haig at Merville at 11 A.M. expressed himself as fully satisfied with the measures that were being taken and the progress made. After a consultation with his corps commanders, General Haig, therefore, issued orders at 1.55 P.M. for a renewed deliberate bombardment—in which, however, no 4.5-inch howitzer ammunition was to be used²—to begin at 2.30 P.M. This fire was to continue till 4 P.M., then quicken up to 4.20 and become intense from 4.20 to 4.30 P.M. when the infantry would advance. The time left was wholly insufficient for infantry preparations. In one case the orders did not reach a brigade commander until 2.45 P.M.; his orders were issued at 3.20 P.M., and only reached the battalions in the line just before zero hour.

The main attack, by direction of the G.O.C. I. Corps, was to be carried out by the 3rd Canadian Brigade

¹ The losses of the 2/Bedfordshire were 11 officers and 487 other ranks; of the 1/4th Camerons, 18 and 215.

² Notification of the replacement at the base of the 4.5-inch howitzer ammunition borrowed for Gallipoli was received by G.H.Q. on the 16th (See "1915" Vol. I. p. 331); but it was not available at the front when First Army orders were issued on the 18th.

18 May. (Br.-General R. E. W. Turner)—which had been moved up and attached to the 7th Division—and the 4th (Guards) Brigade (Br.-General Lord Cavan) of the 2nd Division, side by side against La Quinque Rue, on a front from a little south of the “School House”, up to and including Ferme Cour d’Avoué.¹ A subsidiary attack was to be made a little to the north against Ferme du Bois, by the Indian Corps—to carry out which the Sirhind Brigade was selected.

Owing to delay in the transmission of orders, the bombardment did not begin until after 3 P.M. The instructions to battery commanders gave certain definite points to be shelled, such as the Orchard south-east of La Quinque Rue road junction, buildings along and behind La Quinque Rue, Ferme Cour d’Avoué, Ferme du Bois, and so forth. It was not yet known that the Germans were in occupation of a complete new position extending the whole length of the front from Rue d’Ouvert, behind the Orchard and past the back of Ferme Cour d’Avoué, to north of the Cinder Track; and although the points to be bombarded lay approximately along this line, and were severely battered by the shelling, the new line of trench itself was not seriously affected.

The Germans were on the alert, and during the period of intense bombardment, 4.20 to 4.30 P.M., those near Cour d’Avoué fired rockets with red lights, the signal to their artillery, which had been particularly active on this day, of an imminent attack. But it was not artillery fire, but enfilade machine-gun fire at short range on the right from the new German position—in particular from breastworks near the head of Adalbert Alley—that stopped the attack of the Guards towards the farm. Their leading companies lost nearly half their men in a few minutes in advancing a hundred yards; and, as there was little hope of covering five to six hundred yards in such circumstances, Lord Cavan decided to discontinue the attack. At 7.30 P.M. he was directed by the 2nd Division to entrench and consolidate.²

The attempt of the Sirhind Brigade to support the 4th (Guards) Brigade was abortive.³ The front line and

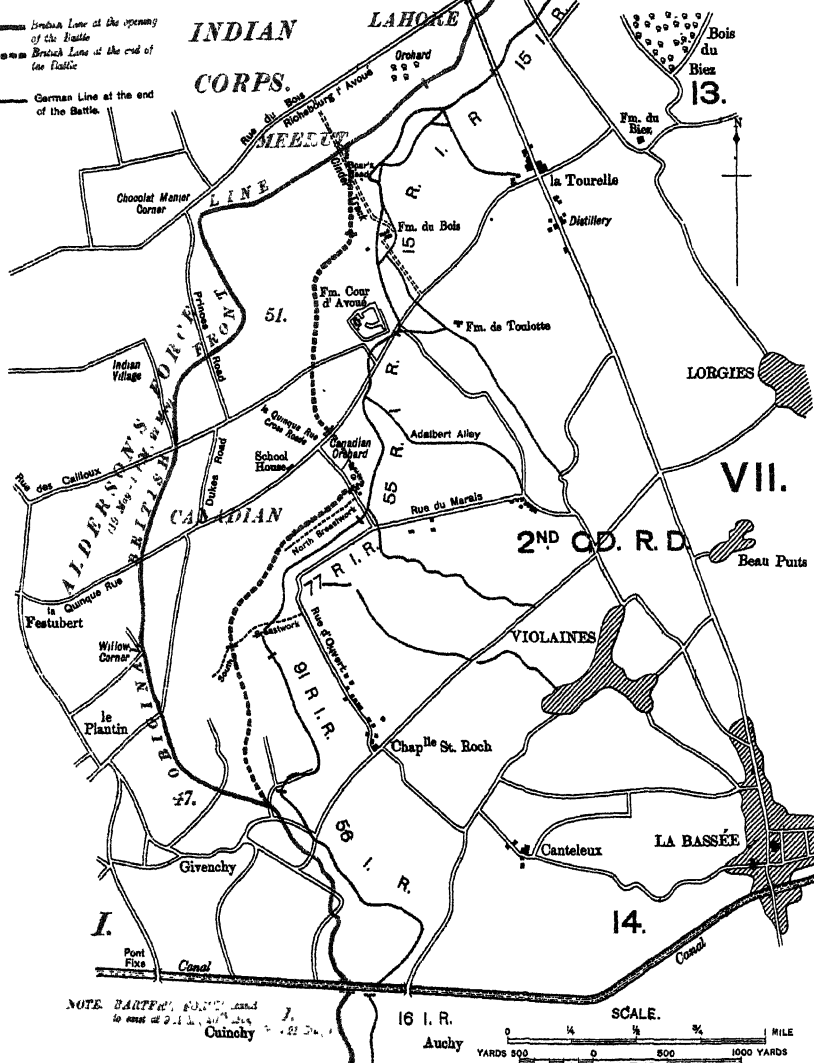
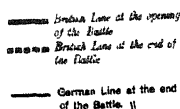
¹ Now outside the German line.

² The 2/Grenadiers lost 5 officers and 83 men; the Irish Guards, 15 and 415.

³ Lieut. J. G. Smyth, 15th Ludhiana Sikhs (Lahore Division) was awarded the V.C. for getting a supply of bombs up to the front under heavy fire, after two attempts had failed and eight out of the ten men of his party had been hit.

SKETCH 10.

**THE RESULT OF THE BATTLE;
& THE FINAL DISTRIBUTION.**



Ordnance Survey, 1928

ground in rear were so heavily shelled that movement was impossible, and after some desperate efforts of the 1/Highland L.I. and 4/King's to get a few men forward the subsidiary attack died away. 18 May.

The 3rd Canadian Brigade,¹ owing to the loss of time in getting orders to it, did not come up into the line until 5.20 P.M., by which hour the attack of the Guards had been definitely checked. The brigade after making a short advance was therefore ordered to relieve the units of the 21st Brigade between Stafford Corner and the right of the Guards.

THE 47TH, 51ST AND CANADIAN DIVISIONS TAKE OVER AND CONSOLIDATE THE NEW FRONT: THE 18TH TO 27TH MAY

Although on the morning of the 18th General Haig still hoped that the 7th and 2nd Divisions would be able to establish a line along La Quinque Rue before nightfall, he intended in any case to begin that evening the relief of the I. Corps, which had now been in action continuously for three days and nights. After due warning to General Monro, orders were issued during the afternoon for the withdrawal of the 7th and 2nd Divisions, the intention being to continue the offensive south-east against Chapelle St. Roch and Violaines with the Canadian and 51st (Highland) Divisions. Sketch 10.

At night the Canadian Division (Lieut.-General E. A. H. Alderson) began the relief of the 7th Division. Under cover of darkness also the 51st Division (Major-General R. Bannatine-Allason) marched from its concentration area east of Hazebrouck to an area three to four miles north-east of Festubert, preparatory to beginning the relief of the 2nd Division on the following night.

By 9 A.M. 20th May, these changes had been satisfactorily carried out, the I. Corps artillery remaining temporarily in its old positions. The Canadian and 51st Divisions² combined as "Alderson's Force",³ now occupied the front line from

¹ 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Canadians. Three batteries of Canadian field artillery also came into action under direction of the G.O.C. R.A. 7th Division.

² The 51st Division, new to the front ["practically untrained and very "green in all field duties" was Earl Haig's marginal remark], was assisted by the loan, from the Indian Corps, of engineer and infantry officers, and machine guns in which it was deficient.

³ The artillery of Alderson's Force was placed under Br.-General J. F. N. Birch, G.O.C., R.A., of the 7th Division. His command consisted of the 7th, 51st and Canadian divisional artillery, VII. Siege (6-inch

20 May. opposite Festubert, the left of the 47th Division, to oppose the Ferme du Bois, where it joined the Indian Corps.

The I. Corps was now re-constituted, and consisted of the 1st, 2nd, 7th and 47th Divisions—Barter's Force ceasing to exist as such. The 1st and 47th Divisions remained holding the front line astride the La Bassée canal, between Cuinchy and Festubert, whilst the 2nd and 7th Divisions were withdrawn to rest billets in the Lillers area.

Whilst these changes and reliefs were in progress the Germans worked assiduously at establishing themselves securely in their new position, and brought up reinforcements. The renewal of the operations under the direction of Lieut.-General Alderson therefore encountered strong opposition; but during the period 19th to 22nd May, the 3rd Canadian Brigade (Br.-General R. E. W. Turner) succeeded in advancing its line in several places nearer to the new German position, particularly towards North Breastwork, and it occupied the Orchard, thenceforward called "Canadian Orchard".¹ On the 28rd May—the day on which Italy declared war against Austria—General Haig held a conference at Hinges, at which arrangements were made for a combined attack by the 47th and Canadian Divisions against Chapelle St. Roch and Rue d'Ouvert. As a preliminary movement, on the 24th—the first day of the Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge in the Ypres Salient—the inner brigades of the two divisions, the 140th Brigade

howitzer) Brigade, VIII. London (5-inch howitzer) Brigade, the XXXVI. Brigade R.F.A., and a section of mountain guns, a total of three divisional artilleries and three independent brigades. It was quite impossible for the staff of a divisional artillery general to deal effectively with so many subordinate commanders, and the trouble, coming immediately after the battle of Festubert, where many difficulties had been experienced, was directly responsible for an important change. The Artillery Adviser (Major-Gen. J. P. Du Cane) addressed a note to the C.G.S. pointing out the need of an artillery commander to co-ordinate the action of the artillery of a corps. As a result the Commander-in-Chief, after considerable discussion, decided on 28rd October 1915 to alter the status of the corps artillery adviser and appoint him "G.O.C., Royal Artillery of the Corps". This was changed on 7th May 1916 to "Brigadier-General R.A. of the Corps", but restored with the original powers on 5th December 1916.

The Royal Engineers obtained a suitable organization earlier. The "Br.-General R.E., attached to G.H.Q." (Br.-General G. H. Fowke) became in February 1915, "Chief Engineer Forces in the Field", and on 20th April 1915, "Engineer-in-Chief", the Engineer advisers in the Armies and corps becoming "Chief Engineers" (still remaining advisers and not executive) on the same date.

¹ For crossing No Man's Land on the night of the 22nd May, and bombing an enemy machine-gun emplacement which was hindering our working parties, Private W. Mariner, 2/K.R.R.C. (1st Division) was awarded the V.C. He was out alone for one and a half hours.

ATTACK OF 47TH AND CANADIAN DIVISIONS 75

(Br.-General G. J. Cuthbert) and the 2nd Canadian Brigade¹ 23 May. (Br.-General A. W. Currie) attacked astride South Breastwork at 2.30 A.M., the artillery of Alderson's Force having maintained slow continuous fire through the night until five minutes previously. The 1/8th London Regiment (Lieut.-Colonel J. Harvey) succeeded in establishing itself in a sector of the German front trench south of South Breastwork, and the 2nd Canadian Brigade was able to get forward some one hundred and fifty yards on an eight-hundred yard frontage in the direction of Rue d'Ouvert. The 3rd Canadian Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel R. Rennie) of the 1st Canadian Brigade (Br.-General M. S. Mercer), which had taken over from the 3rd Canadian Brigade, actually entered the enemy trench opposite Canadian Orchard, but owing to continuous machine-gun fire from both flanks was compelled to evacuate it before daylight.

The main attack by the 47th Division, new to a great battle, and the Canadian Division, scarcely reorganized and rested after its heavy trials at Ypres, took place on the following night (25th), after an artillery preparation throughout the day, in which the one kite balloon with the army in France did its first battle work.² To mislead the enemy, the artillery of the 1st Division, to the south of the 47th, cut the German wire on sectors of its front. At 6.30 P.M. the 142nd Brigade (Br.-General C. S. H.-D.-Willoughby) assaulted with its right on the Givenchy—Chapelle St. Roch road. Advancing with a steadiness and precision worthy of seasoned troops, the 1/24th and 1/23rd London Battalions (under Lieut.-Colonels W. G. Simpson and Lord H. Montagu-Douglas-Scott) leading, the brigade captured the German front and support trenches after considerable resistance on the right and less on the left. This was an average advance of four hundred yards on a frontage of a thousand yards.³ At once a deadly enfilade fire was directed on the trenches by the German artillery, which had registered on them, a heavy battery near Auchy lez la Bassée, far to the south and out of reach of the 47th Division guns, being particularly active. In spite of heavy losses, the brigade clung to its capture;⁴ but it was unable to advance further, for the German infantry was now defending a new line behind the old one.

¹ 5th, 7th, 8th and 10th Canadians.

² See "1915" Vol. I. p. 381.

³ It took prisoner 1 officer and 56 men belonging to the 56th Regiment and to the 91st Reserve Regiment (2nd Guard Reserve Division).

⁴ The 142nd Brigade lost 22 officers and 960 other ranks.

25 May. It could not make ground on the right owing to the inferiority of its hand-grenades, which were of the "jam-pot" variety;¹ on the other hand, it was not to be displaced, and repelled at least one German counter-attack made during the night.

The Canadian attack, owing to lack of ammunition for an adequate artillery preparation, and also to the infantry still being armed with the Ross rifle, which jammed badly in the Flanders mud,² did not make much progress, although an advance eastwards along South Breastwork and across the ground north of this brought the line to within two hundred yards or so of the new German main position.

During the 26th and 27th May, in spite of frequent local counter-attacks by the Germans—particularly by bombing parties about Chapelle St. Roch, and opposite Givenchy—the British maintained their hold on the new line they had reached, and consolidated it.

THE CLOSE OF THE OPERATIONS

These operations, as it turned out, concluded the battle of Festubert. The casualties of the 47th³ and Canadian Divisions during the last period, had been roughly fifteen hundred and two thousand respectively. The total losses in the battle from the night of the 15th/16th until its practical conclusion on the 25th were 710 officers and 15,938 other ranks.⁴

¹ Lance-Corporal L. J. Keyworth 1/24th London Regiment (who died of wounds received at Loos in September) won the first V.C. of the 47th Division for gallantry in a long and desperate bombing encounter with the enemy, in which 58 out of 75 men engaged were killed or wounded.

² It was officially discarded in June. See "1915" Vol. I. p. 244, f.n.

³ On the 31st May, Br.-General G. C. Nugent, commanding the 141st Brigade, was killed. He was succeeded in command by Br.-General W. Thwaites, the G.S.O.1 of the division.

	Officers.			Other Ranks.			Totals.	
	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Officers.	Other Ranks.
2nd Division (15th-20th)	46	120	12	536	3,725	1,006	178	5,287
7th Division (16th-18th)	57	98	12	674	2,628	654	167	3,956
47th Division (16th-25th)	26	133	2	207	1,387	595	166	2,189
Canadian Div. (18th-25th)	25	70	2	356	1,536	215	97	2,107
Meerut Div. (15th-19th)								
British :	29	33	3	102	766	123	70	991
Indian :	2	30	—	91	1,203	134	32	1,428
	185	494	31	1,966	11,245	2,727	710	15,938

The losses of the enemy were about 5,000, including 800 taken prisoner. (See Note II. at end of Chapter.)

On the 25th May, although the Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge was still in progress, Sir John French, at the request of General Foch, had agreed to relieve another French division south of the La Bassée canal, so that the renewed French offensive on Vimy ridge might be further reinforced.¹ The British commander considered that the capture of this ridge was now the most important local objective, and that he could assist the French more fully to this end by operating to the south instead of the north of the La Bassée canal. On the same day, therefore, he ordered General Haig to make preparations to relieve the French 58th Division between Grenay and the Vermelles—Le Rutoire track. The infantry of the 2nd Division marched south from its rest billets west of Béthune for this purpose,² the artillery of the French 58th Division remaining temporarily in position to support it.

25 May.

Sketch A.

On the same day also Sir John French informed General Haig that he thought it improbable that the offensive in which the First Army was now engaged could be completed successfully owing to the strength of the enemy's defences and the natural difficulties of the ground. The Germans had brought up considerable reserves and had had time to make their new front line practically as strong as that originally held. Ammunition stocks were very low,³ and even if there had been sufficient ammunition for another effort, he doubted the possibility of success. He had decided, in consequence, to abandon the offensive, and desired no more from the First Army than that it should hold the enemy on its front in order to prevent the transfer of troops to oppose the renewed French offensive on Vimy ridge, which eventually took place on the 16th June. The Germans must have had somewhat similar thoughts; for they, on the 25th, brought their Ypres operations to an end.

RETROSPECT

The results of the attack at Festubert had been tantalizing. Undertaken solely for the purpose of assisting the

¹ For the French operations on the British right, which continued until the 18th June, see Note I. at end of Chapter.

² The relief of the French 58th Division was not actually completed till the evening of the 31st May.

³ The amount of ammunition per gun on the L. of C. at noon on the 26th May was practically nil :—

18-pdr., 2 rounds; 15-pdr., 4; 18-pdr., 40; 4·5-inch howitzer, 12; 5-inch howitzer, 14; 6-inch howitzer, 27; 6-inch gun, nil; 9·2-inch howitzer, 36; 15-inch howitzer, 7.

French, considerable success had been achieved even with the small number of guns and limited amount of ammunition available. Units in some cases had reached the objectives assigned to them, and the Germans had been compelled to withdraw from a strong position on which they had expended many months of labour to a hastily improvised new line. If this could have been attacked at once, there was every reason to expect that it could have been easily carried. How perilous the enemy thought the situation will be seen from his narrative in the Note which follows this chapter. The British leaders felt that they were on right lines, and that with more gun support they might have reached Aubers ridge. The offensive spirit and self-sacrifice of the infantry was as great, if not greater than ever, and although there were no fresh divisions to relieve the tired ones, success was judged to be a matter of persistence. Another similar effort might break through the German line, and at any rate compel the enemy to bring up greater reinforcements, which otherwise might be used against the French, who had made good progress. The fighting standard of the army, which had suffered owing to the class of reinforcement supplied after "First Ypres", was improving again. The wounded of 1914 were returning to the front, and by February 1915 the mass of re-enlisted old soldiers—many of them veterans of the S. African war, or even older—and the residue of the pre-war Special Reserve had been used up. The average British citizen was now appearing in the ranks, and the young officers joining were also of a fine type. Time of course was required to train the latter as company and platoon commanders, and also to train selected men as N.C.O.'s for the new formations¹; but the right class of man was now there. On the material side, however, heavy guns and high explosive shell² were necessary to prepare the way and deal with machine-gun nests, and for the reasons given in telling the story of "Munitions" in the previous volume,³ these guns and shells were not forthcoming. Yet every day's delay in providing them meant another twenty-four hours presented to the enemy in which to perfect his defensive arrangements, and increased the difficulties of the next attack.

For the moment the Germans seemed to be superior both

¹ For an account of the training of the new divisions, see Note I. Chapter XV.

² Earl Haig's marginal remark here was "of good quality so as to be capable of bursting".

³ "1915" Vol. I. Chapter III.

in attack and in defence. They had gained ground at Ypres, aided it is true by the illegitimate advantage conferred by the use of gas, but this element of surprise was not the determining factor in their success. At Ypres it was their heavy artillery which levelled down all opposition for the attacking infantry, which was then able to make calculated short advances; in defence, at Neuve Chapelle and Festubert, by organized shelling of back areas, this artillery embarrassed concentration near the front and prevented British reinforcements from coming up to exploit initial successes. The German infantry, with its wonderful array of heavy howitzers, its numerous trench mortars and machine guns, and its most effective "stick-grenades", was certainly admirable in the defence, but the British infantry, with far inferior means, had in 1914 obtained equally good results. The British commanders not unnaturally felt that, given anything like the same artillery support and the same equipment for close fighting that the enemy battalions possessed, their infantry, even with its hastily trained subordinate leaders, could be relied on in the attack to do better than the foe. Unfortunately sufficient numbers of heavy guns, of high explosive shell and of implements of trench warfare, were all lacking owing to British unpreparedness for war; the B.E.F. was not in 1915 in a condition to make the effort that our French Allies expected of the British Empire in a life and death struggle. Yet the opportunity for an offensive to expel the invaders of France and Belgium, now afforded by the absence of so many German divisions in Russia, might never recur.

NOTE I

THE FRENCH TENTH ARMY 15TH MAY-18TH JUNE 1915

On the 15th May the French Tenth Army continued its attack **Sketch 5.** against the Labyrinthe, Neuville St. Vaast and Souchez. After an artillery preparation of at least two hours, the infantry of the different corps assaulted at various times, 12.45 P.M., 3.15 P.M. and 5.10 P.M.; but "no serious progress was made", only a few houses of Neuville and small portions of the trenches in the Labyrinthe being entered. During the 15th General Foch came to the conclusion that it would be eight or ten days before another general attack could be made, and on the 18th General Joffre agreed to this. Operations were not resumed until the 7th June, and then only to secure, as preliminary measures, Neuville and the Labyrinthe, the former, and nearly all of the latter, being occupied on the 10th.

The final general attack was begun on the 16th June¹ and con-

¹ Two small simultaneous British offensives near Givenchy and Bellewaarde are described in the next Chapter.

tinued until the 18th with "small result", and the battle was then brought to an end.

The reasons given for the lack of success are :—the insufficient number of heavy guns and the domination of the German artillery ; the numerous burstings of guns and defective ammunition owing to hasty manufacture ; and want of experience of the junior officers and N.C.O.'s owing to previous heavy losses. " Our battalions often " only pushed on straight ahead, bravely, but without thinking of " manœuvring, and they often lost by enemy counter-attack ground " that they had brilliantly won ".¹

The French casualties in the battle were : killed 787 officers, 34,221 other ranks ; wounded, 1,443 officers and 63,619 other ranks ; prisoners, 30 officers and 2,433 other ranks : total, 2,260 officers and 100,273 other ranks. According to the German published casualty lists, the enemy lost 49,446 of all ranks, of whom 136 officers and 7,300 other ranks were prisoners in French hands.

NOTE II

THE GERMAN WITHDRAWAL TO A NEW DEFENCE LINE ON THE NIGHT OF THE 16TH/17TH MAY, AND THE ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS²

Sketch 7. During the morning of the 16th May the local reserves of the German *57th Regiment* had not sufficed to regain the trenches captured by the 6th Brigade near Ferme du Bois, and by the 22nd Brigade near Stafford Corner. The *11th Jäger Battalion*, with its machine-gun company, sent up to counter-attack, was quickly absorbed into the defence of the new line opposite the 22nd Brigade.

At 2.30 P.M. General von Obernitz, commander of the *79th Brigade*, was entrusted by the *VII. Corps* with the task of recapturing the lost trenches of the *57th Regiment*. The *11th Jäger Battalion* and the *II. Battalion* of the *104th (Saxon) Regiment*³ were placed at his disposal, also any available companies of the *55th Regiment* of the neighbouring brigade that held the line to the north of the Cinder Track.

These instructions did not reach the general until 4 P.M., by which time the *11th Jäger Battalion*, having reinforced the new position along South Breastwork, was attempting by fire and bombing to force the South Staffordshire from their position along La Quinque Rue. Simultaneously the battalion of the *104th Regiment*, on the northern part of the battle line, was moving up by the communication trenches with orders to attack in conjunction with two companies of the *55th*, from about the Ferme Cour d'Avoué, to recapture the lost trenches west of the farm. As evening drew on, however, reports showed that these isolated efforts were of no avail. The troops being too few to deliver a counter-attack on any extensive scale, General von Obernitz for the time being ordered the existing positions to be maintained.

¹ French Official Account, Tome iii. pp. 96-7.

² From information kindly supplied by the *Reichsarchiv* and from regimental histories.

³ This battalion had been hurried south by rail during the morning from the *XIX. Corps* opposite Armentières, and reached the battle zone about the Ferme Cour d'Avoué in the late afternoon. " Regt. No. 104."

During the evening two Saxon battalions, one each from the *139th* and *179th Regiments*, arrived from Armentières and were sent straight up into the battle line.

At 9.30 P.M. fresh directions were issued from *14th Divisional headquarters* at La Bassée, which confirmed the order to stand fast and arranged for the *77th Landwehr Regiment* and an engineer company from *VII. Corps* reserve to construct a fresh line of defence in the sector of the *57th Regiment*. This line was to connect up as far as possible the strong points still held at nightfall, beginning at the Ferme du Bois, passing behind the Ferme Cour d'Avoué, and then along La Quinque Rue as far as Adalbert Alley; thence it was to be traced behind the Orchard to the Rue d'Ouvert. From this point South Breastwork was to be held as a fire trench.

At that time it was still the intention of the divisional commander to regain the lost trenches by a counter-attack. During the night (16th/17th) the reports on the situation and condition of the troops caused him definitely to abandon this idea, and to limit further operations to holding the new front. A divisional order to this effect was issued at 1.25 A.M. on the 17th, all troops still in front of the new line of resistance in course of construction during the night being ordered to withdraw to it.

In the early hours of the 17th, the position of the Germans was, **Sketch 8.** according to their own records, precarious. The *77th Landwehr Regiment* had been travelling by rail throughout the previous night (15th/16th) from the Ypres area, where it had been engaged in digging defences, with occasional fighting, since December 1914.¹ The three battalions had detrained at Seclin, south of Lille, at 6 A.M. on the 16th, and then marched for La Bassée, arriving at Marquillies at 9.30 P.M. and reaching the positions where they were to dig about 1 A.M., a number of men having fallen out exhausted during the circuitous march of 16 miles.

By daylight a shallow trench and a small breastwork had been constructed along the trace of the new line. The troops that had been sent forward to reinforce the *57th Regiment* the previous day, belonging to the *104th*, *139th* and *179th Saxon Regiments* and the *11th Jäger Battalion*, had been ordered to withdraw to the new line at dawn. Many of them did not receive this order in time, particularly those in the Quadrilateral; but others began to stream back across and beyond the shallow trench that had been dug by the *77th Landwehr Regiment*. They brought with them the wildest rumours of defeat and disorder in front, and were only stopped and brought back by desperate measures taken by various officers already in the new line. Heavy British artillery fire in the early hours made this work very difficult, a number of men being killed or drowned in the deep dykes, in which they attempted to take cover.²

During the 17th units hurriedly sent south by rail from both the *II. Bavarian Corps* and the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*, which were holding the line near Messines and Armentières, respectively, arrived at La Bassée, and were sent up at once, piecemeal, to reinforce. In this way, at 10.30 A.M., two companies of the *16th Bavarian Reserve Regiment* reached the centre of the new position and assisted in completing its construction. These two companies

¹ It belonged to the *38th Landwehr Brigade*, attached to the *XXVI. Reserve Corps*. See "1915" Vol. I. pp. 336 and 378.

² "Landwehr Regt. No. 77."

were followed by four more Bavarian companies, two from each of the 17th and 20th *Bavarian Reserve Regiments*, those of the 20th reinforcing the right about the Ferme du Bois and the Ferme Cour d'Avoué, where the British were pressing their attacks; those of the 17th, the left, along South Breastwork. The latter arrived just in time (6.30 P.M.) to meet the attack of the 2/Bedfordshire and the 1/4th Camerons on that trench.

At 11 P.M. the 77th *Landwehr Regiment* was ordered to return to La Bassée to rest, its relief being carried out under cover of darkness by a composite Bavarian regiment from Messines, consisting of a second battalion each of the 5th, 15th and 18th *Bavarian Regiments*.¹

In this manner the new German line between the Ferme du Bois and Rue d'Ouvvert was gradually built up, and by midnight of the 17th/18th it was occupied by approximately seven battalions, almost double the strength with which the original position had been held before the first assault.

Sketch
10.

Whilst the relief of the British 2nd and 7th Divisions was in progress between the 18th and 27th May, the Germans were able to establish themselves securely in their new position. The 2nd *Guard Reserve Division*, which had been brought from Alsace to Douai on the 14th May as a reserve to the troops holding out against the French offensive on Vimy ridge, was marched on the 19th to La Bassée. On the following evening its 26th *Reserve Brigade* (15th *Reserve* and 55th *Reserve Regiments*) took over the trenches of the 55th and 57th *Regiments* respectively between the Rue d'Ouvvert and the La Bassée—Estaires road. It also relieved the battalions of the 104th, 139th and 179th *Saxon Regiments* and the various companies of the II. *Bavarian Corps* and the 6th *Bavarian Reserve Division*, that had been hurried south from the Ypres sector on the 16th May, and now returned to their units. The 55th and 57th *Regiments*, after four days' continuous fighting and heavy losses, were now withdrawn to rest billets south-west of Lille.² In the course of the next few days the other brigade of the 2nd *Guard Reserve Division*, the 38th *Reserve Brigade* (77th *Reserve* and 91st *Reserve Regiments*) reinforced the front near the Rue d'Ouvvert. The attack of the 47th and Canadian Divisions on the 25th was therefore met by entirely fresh troops. Thus, though no German reserves had been called on to deal with the attack in the Battle of Aubers Ridge on the 9th May, the operations at Festubert had brought to the battle every German who could be spared.

¹ Bavarian Official Account.

² The losses of the 55th *Regiment* during the 16th, 17th and 18th May were 10 officers and 244 other ranks killed and wounded. The 57th *Regiment*, which had borne the brunt of the operations, had been severely handled. By the evening of the first day's fighting its II. and III. Battalions that held the front line, had been reduced to a total for the two of 150 men. The I. Battalion, which reinforced during the day, had lost two-thirds of its strength by the evening of the 17th. In the two days' fighting the three battalions of this regiment had thus been reduced to an approximate strength of six hundred all told. "Regt. No. 55"; "Regt. No. 57."

CHAPTER V

JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 1915

THE SECOND ACTION OF GIVENCHY. FIRST ATTACK ON BELLEWAARDE. ACTIONS OF HOOGE

(Sketches B, 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)

GENERAL SITUATION. ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS. FORMATION OF THIRD ARMY

DURING the last days of May 1915, after the official end on the 25th of that month of the Battles of Ypres and the Battle of Festubert, and during June, July, August and September, until the opening of the French offensives in Champagne and Artois and the simultaneous British offensive at Loos, there was no change in the general situation on the Western front. The French operations known as the Second Battle of Artois, begun on the 9th May, were nominally continued until the 18th June,¹ and our Allies had "a series of checks" in the Argonne.² On the British front a few actions took place for which "battle honours" have been awarded, and of which brief mention will be made. In general, however, it was a period of trench warfare, with a steady tale of three hundred British casualties a day. During this interval, whilst French and British were preparing for a new effort, both sides endeavoured to improve their defensive measures. As a whole, there was a distinct falling off in the daily volume of fire, but both "sniping" and the use of machine guns were organized and made systematic. In some areas mine warfare was actively conducted: not yet directed to a great objective—like the capture of Messines ridge in 1917—but a struggle between the belligerents for local

¹ See Note I. Chapter IV.

² Palat, ix., p. 390. See Note I. at end of Chapter.

superiority underground. Early in July General Joffre began to reduce the number of troops in the north in favour of his operations in Champagne.

Sketch 1. The Germans continued their advance into Russia, thanks largely to their opponents' disastrous lack of ammunition and even of arms. They captured Warsaw and Ivangorod on the 5th August, Kovno on the 17th, Novo Georgievsk on the 20th, Brest Litovsk on the 25th and Grodno on the 3rd September. Their success induced the Tzar to supersede the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaivich on the 7th September, and nominally to take command himself, with General Alexeiev as Chief of the Staff.¹ The Germans naturally refrained from offensive operations in France, though they occasionally made a feint and spread rumours in neutral countries that hundreds of thousands of reinforcements were being sent to Arras and Flanders.²

In the other theatres of war during this period the Italians attacked and gained a little ground in the First and Second Battles of the Isonzo, 29th June-7th July, and 18th July-10th August; in Gallipoli the landing at Suvla took place on the 6th August; in Mesopotamia the advance up the Euphrates was going well, Nasiriya being taken on the 25th July; and the governor of German South-West Africa surrendered the colony on the 9th July to General Botha. At sea there were no events of importance, although the economic blockade³ had been begun and submarine enterprise on both sides increased and, as a consequence, the first "Q ships" began to make their appearance. On the 7th June the first Zeppelin was destroyed in air combat.⁴ In July the Ministry of Munitions was organized, and the National Registration Act became law.⁵

¹ On the Tzar's abdication on 15th March 1917, General Alexeiev continued in command without further appointment.

² *Inter alia*, reports were circulated by the Germans via Switzerland that they were secretly preparing a great attack near Lille, troops being gradually sent there in secrecy, in small numbers at a time, and that three million shells of all calibres were being accumulated at Aix la Chapelle, Liège and Cologne. These rumours had no effect on the Allied plans.

³ See Note II., "The Economic War," at end of Chapter.

⁴ Flight Sub-Lieutenant R. A. J. Warneford, R.N.A.S., single-handed in an aeroplane, chased and completely destroyed this Zeppelin near Ghent. He dropped 20 lb. bombs on it from a hundred or two hundred feet above. The explosion of one bomb overturned his machine and stopped the engine. In spite of this, he landed in enemy territory, restarted his engine and returned to his base. He received the V.C.

⁵ See "1915" Vol. I. pp. 48-50.

Throughout the period General Joffre was still insistent on the B.E.F. taking a greater share of the front. He well might be; for the French were responsible for nearly four hundred miles—much of it certainly “quiet”—of the 475 miles of front between Switzerland and the sea. He definitely objected, however, to the British relieving his troops near the coast, at Ypres and Nieuport on either side of the Belgian Army, on the ground that the front there was intimately connected with the defence of the fortress of Dunkirk. It was definitely arranged, however, that the Second Army should take over the portion of the line north of Ypres from its left as far as Boesinghe, part of the French XXXVI. Corps remaining between this point and the Belgian right at the Old Fort of Knoeke. On completion of this change on the 7th-8th June, the British held the whole of the Ypres Salient.

In a letter to the War Office, dated 11th June, Sir John French strongly opposed a French suggestion that the Ypres Salient should be evacuated in order to provide the requisite troops to relieve General de Castelnau's Army of six divisions between Hébuterne and Chaulnes (south by east of Hébuterne), a front twenty-one miles long and separated from the British right near Béthune by a sector nearly thirty miles in length held by the French Tenth Army.¹ He pointed out that such a withdrawal would have a far-reaching moral effect on the British troops and the Belgian Army, and that, as it would shorten the German line far more than our own, it would free hostile forces for an offensive, and an attack would certainly follow. He also objected on general grounds to a group of British divisions being interpolated in the French line, as proposed. In such circumstances, not to mention the administrative inconveniences, eight British divisions would be required instead of six French; for the French were, in the first place, able to hold the line more thinly, having more guns and ammunition; and, secondly, the whole of the forces south of Amiens being homogeneous and directly under General Joffre, he need not, as the British must, keep a local reserve behind the six divisions in question.

The British Commander-in-Chief was entirely in favour of taking the offensive in conjunction with the French as

¹ General Joffre had in his mind the renewal of the Vimy offensive, which the Tenth Army undertook on the 25th September, and apparently did not place sufficient confidence in the offensive capacities of the British to entrust it to them and allow them to relieve the Tenth Army.

soon as was feasible, and, in a further letter to the War Office on the 23rd June, he endeavoured to overcome the idea that it was not possible to break through the successive lines of German defences. He maintained that they could be captured if they were sufficiently shelled and an adequate and properly equipped force of infantry¹ resolutely employed at more than one point and over a prolonged period; that previous attempts to break through had failed because the British never had a sufficiency of ammunition, and the French, being spread out over a very long front, never had a sufficiency of men; and that it was necessary to be greatly superior on the front of attack not only to the hostile troops actually there, but also to any reserves that the enemy might be able to employ. He begged that he might be informed whether and when further divisions would be sent out, as every day's delay meant a corresponding strengthening of the German defences and added to the difficulty in breaking through them.

In response, over and above the three new divisions, 9th, 12th and 14th, which had arrived during May,² thirteen more new divisions, including the 2nd Canadian Division, were sent to France during July, August and the early part of September, the last named formation forming, with the original Canadian Division, the Canadian Corps.³

¹ The B.E.F. was 237 machine guns short of the establishment of four guns per battalion on the 17th July.

² The 9th (Scottish) Division on 9th May; the 14th (Light), on the 18th; the 12th (officially the Eastern Division though never spoken of by this name) on the 29th. On the 1st June a VI. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir J. L. Keir) was formed and took over the left of the line at Ypres, receiving the 4th Division from the V. Corps and the 6th Division from the III. The new divisions were then divided between the III., V., and VI. Corps. It is unnecessary to give the frequent re-groupings of divisions that took place, and only the organization at the time of important operations will henceforth be noted.

³ The troops, too, on the Gallipoli peninsula were reinforced in July and August by five divisions, and also by the 2nd Mounted Division from Egypt. By September all the 1st Line Territorial divisions and all the divisions of the first three New Armies except the 16th (South Irish) had gone overseas. The divisions sent to France and the dates of their going were as follows: 15th (Scottish) (7th July); 17th (Northern) (12th July); 37th (18th July); 19th (Western) (16th July); 20th (Light) (20th July); 18th (Eastern) (24th July); 23rd (25th August); 24th (30th Aug.); 22nd (4th Sept.); 21st (9th Sept.); 2nd Canadian (14th Sept.); 26th (19th Sept.); 25th (25th Sept.).

The five sent to Gallipoli were the 10th (Irish), 11th (Northern), 18th (Western), 53rd (Welsh) and 54th (East Anglian). They of course took with them a proportion of the precious output of the munition factories.

The new corps, besides the Canadian (Lieut.-General E. A. H. Alderson), formed in France were: 14th July, VII. (Lieut.-General Sir T. D'O. Snow) and X. (Lieut.-General Sir T. L. N. Morland); 29th August,

These additional forces sent to France did not however remain available to form a reserve to break through the German front; for during the closing days of May, the First Army had taken over from the French an additional five miles of front from Cuinchy southward to opposite Lens, and during August the B.E.F. became responsible for another fifteen miles—not the whole twenty-one miles from Chaumes to Hébuterne requested by General Joffre, but from Curlu on the Somme to Hébuterne. The British force there was organized under General Sir C. C. Monro as the Third Army.¹ The French Tenth Army, now preparing for the autumn offensive, held the front between it and the First Army.

Sketch B.

THE FIRST INTER-ALLIED MILITARY CONFERENCE

It was at this time, in view of Italy having entered the war, that General Joffre took up the question of the combination of the Allied operations. He referred to the matter on the occasion of a conference held at Chantilly on the 23rd June to give sanction to the organization of the French Armies into three Groups.² At this meeting were present, the President, M. Viviani, the President of the Council, and the Minister of War, M. Millerand, General Joffre and the three generals who were to receive the command of the Groups of Armies: Foch, de Castelnau and Dubail. It was decided, with a view to the better co-ordination of effort, to arrange a conference of the representatives of the Allied armies.

This first Inter-Allied Military Conference took place at Chantilly on the 7th July, with M. Millerand in the chair, and was attended by General Joffre and his "Major

XI. (Lieut.-General R. Haking); and, 6th September, XII. (Lieut.-General Sir H. F. M. Wilson). The VIII. and IX. Corps were formed at Gallipoli.

On 18th July Major-General R. D. Whigham became Sub-Chief of the General Staff, vice Major-General E. M. Perceval, who took over the command of the 49th Division, vice Major-General T. S. Baldock, wounded near Ypres on 16th July.

On 19th August Colonel H. M. Trenchard assumed command of the Royal Flying Corps in France, vice Major-General Sir D. Henderson, who returned to the War Office to deal, as Member of the Army Council, with the problem of the rapidly expanding air forces.

¹ The negotiations leading up to the relief of the French are dealt with in the next Chapter. The Third Army was officially formed on 18th July, and consisted of VII. Corps (4th, 37th and 48th Divisions) and X. Corps (5th, 18th and 51st Divisions), with the Indian Cavalry Corps. General Monro was succeeded in the I. Corps by Lieut.-General H. de la P. Gough.

² Palat, ix., p. 383; *Revue Militaire Française*, July-Sept. 1921, p. 73.

general" General Pellé; Sir John French and his C.G.S., Sir W. Robertson; the Belgian Sub-Chief of the Staff, Major-General Wielemans; and the Italian, Russian and Serbian military attachés, Lieut.-Colonel di Breganze, Colonel Ignatiev and Colonel Stephanovich. General Joffre was most anxious to centralize the conduct of the war; but for that the time was hardly ripe, and he did no more officially than point out to the representatives that "the most favourable conditions for victory would be theoretically obtained if the Allied armies were in a position to make a vigorous offensive simultaneously against the Austro-German 'bloc'. It did not seem possible to achieve this absolute concord of offensives. Thanks to their central position and the strength of their material organization, the Austro-Germans would still for a long time be able to collect sufficient forces against one of their adversaries to be superior, or, at the very least, equal to him. . . . On the other hand, if it was settled that the Allied Powers should not act offensively except they could all do so simultaneously, they ran the risk of the Austro-German armies making their principal effort against each of the Entente armies in turn, and trying to drive them out of the field in succession." General Joffre expressed great anxiety for concerted action between the Italian and Serbian armies. Sir J. French stated that he was fully in accord with General Joffre's views that the general strategic situation demanded the offensive, and pledged himself to support the French Armies to the utmost of his means.

The conference led to nothing definite at the time, except a general agreement that each national army should be active in its own way; but the ideas put forward by the French Commander-in-Chief¹ produced further discussion, and, after the Chantilly Conference of the 6th, 7th and 8th December 1915, the more or less simultaneous offensives of 1916.

During the spring and summer of 1915 both the French and the British Governments were naturally much concerned with the operations in Gallipoli. From April onward the former, and soon General Joffre also, were definitely

¹ General Joffre was still only "Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the North-East"; he was not appointed Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies until 2nd December 1915. He was at the same time provided with a special section "Théâtre d'opérations extérieures", known as "T.O.E.", for the co-ordination of the Allied operations outside France.

in favour of a campaign in the East as part of the combined effort against the Central Powers ; but the French commander was not prepared to spare troops for it until his September offensive in France had taken place and a definite plan for their employment had been drawn up on the spot by a selected general. The British War Council devoted most of its attention to the East, and from 7th June to 30th October met under the name of the "Dardanelles Committee".¹ At an Inter-Allied Conference held at Calais on the 11th September 1915, the eve of Loos, at which M. Millerand, Generals Joffre and Sarraill, Lord Kitchener and Sir John French were present, a plan for the employment of a French force on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles was accepted. The development of this scheme, which eventually resulted in a landing at Salonika, will be dealt with later in the volume.²

LEWIS GUNS. EXPERIMENTAL SECTION. MANY INVENTIONS. TACTICAL DOCTRINE

Of the more important changes, not recorded elsewhere, which affected the B.E.F. during 1915, mention may be made of the first issue of Lewis guns³ to the infantry. One per infantry battalion⁴ in six selected divisions was supplied on the 14th July. By the beginning of July the manufacturers had delivered 16,000 Mills hand-grenades, of which the output was to reach 800,000 per week by July 1916. The first order for one thousand Stokes mortars was placed in August. Throughout 1915, however, the manufacture in the R.E. Workshops of local patterns of trench-mortars, rifle-grenades and hand-grenades was continued in order to eke out the scanty supplies from home.

¹ See "1914" Vol. II. p. 10. For account of the French deliberations see Oehmichen.

² See Chapter XXIII.

³ The Lewis gun is a shoulder-controlled light automatic weapon ; weight 26 lbs., air-cooled and loaded by means of a circular magazine containing 47 rounds. It can fire at the rate of six or seven hundred rounds a minute in short bursts. It is carried and fired by one man ; he requires a loader who also carries ammunition.

The Vickers machine gun is fired from a tripod and is water-cooled ; weight of gun 28½ lbs. or 38½ when jacket is full of water ; weight of tripod 20 lbs. It is fed by belts containing 250 rounds each, and can fire 500 rounds a minute. Two men carry gun and tripod and two attend to ammunition. Thus, with two spare numbers, the detachment consists of 6 men.

⁴ The allotment originally authorised was 4 guns per battalion and per cavalry regiment ; in July 1918, the maximum of 36 per infantry and 12 per pioneer battalion was reached.

An important innovation, directed towards the improvement and standardization of the weapons of trench warfare, was the formation in June 1915 at G.H.Q. of the Inventions Committee, composed of officers of the General Staff, Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers. Its duties as originally laid down were to examine inventions connected with trench warfare that were submitted or came to notice; and to undertake experimental work. Up to that date such matters had been dealt with by the Engineer-in-Chief (Engineer Adviser), who borrowed officers and men from Engineer units to carry out any work that was required. The Committee, though never definitely abolished, did not continue in existence very long, the General Staff preferring to deal through the Engineer-in-Chief's staff with a small Experimental Section R.E. This unit, consisting at first of one officer, was, from June 1915 onwards, gradually expanded into a special section of two officers and 18 picked N.C.O.'s and sappers. Its existence was not officially recognized and it did not receive an "establishment" until October 1918. The trial of and experiments with hand and rifle-grenades,¹ trench-mortars, flares, land-mines, delay-action fuzes, catapults, smoke producers, body armour, armour-piercing bullets, apparatus for the destruction of wire, anti-tank defences, aeroplane height-finders, and optical instruments comprised some of its more important activities. In close touch with the fighting troops, the Section eventually established liaison with the Ministry of Munitions through an officer formerly in charge of the Section who was, in 1916, permanently sent to the Ministry. For the most part the Experimental Section invented at a few hours' notice and manufactured from materials at hand any device required; for instance, land-mines, which depended on the shearing of a gramophone needle; and traps to be left behind in abandoned trenches or in No Man's Land, with the spring of a common mouse trap as the releasing force.²

Many and various devices for dealing with the enemy were examined and reported on by the Experimental

¹ By investigating accidents with Mills grenades, the Experimental Section was able to trace those due to defects of manufacture to the output of one particular establishment.

² In all its handling of high-explosives only one accident—but that a fatal one—occurred: an American, 2/Lieut. W. L. Breese, R.H.G., serving as a temporary officer in the British army and attached to the Section at the suggestion of Colonel Lewis (the inventor of the gun that bears his name), was killed at the trials of a rocket gun devised by the colonel.

Section, some inventors offering only ideas, others being desirous of trying the completed article at the front. An American suggested the use of a giant fire hose which, duly supplied with water, would obliterate the German trenches. Armour and shields, both worn on the body and mounted on wheels, were submitted, most of them forgetting that there is a limit to the weight it is possible to propel or carry over broken ground. A steel "crocodile", guaranteed to "find" its own way forward through entanglements and brush—"wood", was tried, and worked very well—on a parade ground. There was a kite to drop explosives; a chain shot to kill dozens of men at a time; a grapnel which, fired over a wire entanglement, enabled it to be hauled away—if the enemy permitted; a fan to repel gas clouds; arrows with H.E. heads to be fired at machine-gun emplacements by a bow "more accurate than a rifle;" a boomerang hand-grenade, to kill Germans behind traverses. Percussion grenades came by the dozen, and the handling of them—over 90 per cent failing to explode when thrown and having to be picked up "live"—was a constant and abiding danger. One grenade depended for its action on a piece of stout tape unwinding when it was thrown. An Italian produced a box like a barrel organ, which, when its handle was turned, projected a stream of disc grenades, igniting them like matches by friction against a roughened surface as they flew out. An acetylene gun which dropped shells at short ranges, proved extraordinarily accurate; but, owing to its delicate mechanism, it was worthless in the mud of the trenches. A "death ray" was investigated, and found to be a thorough "fake". In general the enthusiasm of inventors and their success in demonstration behind the lines were far in excess of the effectiveness of their "gadgets" when tested in the face of the enemy.

The General Staff, by the issue of an ever-lengthening series of instructional pamphlets, began gradually to build up a doctrine of the new warfare. "The Training of Divisions for Offensive Action", "The Division in Defence", and "The Training and Employment of Bombers", were the most celebrated; whilst the Artillery Adviser G.H.Q. by "Artillery Notes" and the Engineer-in-Chief, by means of "Field Work Plates" and "Field Work Notes", kept the Armies informed of new devices found effective on different parts of the front.

FIRST ARMY: THE SECOND ACTION OF GIVENCHY,
15TH AND 16TH JUNE

Sketch
11.

The fighting requiring mention in the period June-September 1915 took place in the First Army area round Givenchy and in the Second Army area near Hooze.

On the 25th May, when Sir John French decided to bring the battle of Festubert to a close, he directed the G.O.C. of the First Army to carry on offensive action as best he could in order to afford help to General Foch. The French commander, still engaged in the Second Battle of Artois, was planning to renew the attack on the whole front of his Second and Tenth Armies on the 2nd June, and hoped that the British would co-operate on his left towards Loos. Sir D. Haig laid before the Commander-in-Chief the difficulties of supporting the French in the way desired on account of the open nature of the ground and the consequent impossibility of finding suitable positions for artillery and forming-up places for infantry. He advocated a smaller operation north of the canal from Givenchy towards the higher ground beyond Violaines, which would embarrass the enemy, and be a useful step towards a larger operation later on. If there were enough ammunition, this offensive action might be continued nearer the French by another small attack south of the canal towards the rising ground near Haisnes (1½ miles south of La Bassée). Sir John French, in view of the state of the ammunition supply, had on the 28th May to order the First Army to limit its operations to "small aggressive threats which will not require much ammunition or many troops". But he asked General Haig to submit plans for the offensives which he suggested; to attack somewhere soon, preferably south of the canal; and to be ready to advance on Loos should the French gain a decided success at Vimy. After investigation it was found that the Haisnes operations had little chance of success until Violaines had been captured, for Haisnes was covered by the "Railway Triangle", which, in its turn, was dominated by the higher ground near Violaines. After some discussion, therefore, Sir John French formally approved of the concentration of the First Army's efforts on gaining ground from Givenchy towards Violaines, north of the canal.

On the 30th May the First Army issued preliminary orders to the IV. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir H. Rawlinson) for the preparation of an attack against the line Chapelle

SKETCH 11.

SKETCH 11.

ACTION OF GIVENCHY 15th - 16th JUNE 1915.

N.

**INDIAN
CORPS.**

Meerut

2ND GD. R. D.

Rue des Cailloux

la Quinque Rue

51.

Festubert

IV.

le Plantin

7.

159TH INF. BDE.

162ND INF. BDE.

4TH L. N. L.

80TH INF. BDE.

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St. Roch—Rue d'Ouvert, involving an advance of a quarter May- of a mile, at a date provisionally fixed as the 11th June, June. by which time sufficient ammunition for a small operation would be available. At the same time, the I. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir C. C. Monro) was called on to prepare a project for an attack south of the canal towards Haisnes.

As a first step to further operations, General Haig between the 31st May and 2nd June carried out a re-organization of his front into one defensive and two offensive sectors. The latter were allotted to the I. Corps (47th, 1st and 2nd Divisions) south of the canal, with a front of six miles, and the IV. Corps (Canadian, 7th and 51st Divisions) next to it, with a narrow front of just over two miles. The Indian Corps (Meerut, Lahore, 8th and 49th Divisions) was given the defensive rôle on a front of eight miles.

On the 8th June General Haig was informed that General Foch had not been able to fix a definite date for the attack of the troops under his command, and the British operation was therefore postponed. On the 12th¹ notification was received that the French would attack on the 15th and the preliminary bombardment was begun; but on the 13th their zero day was changed to the 16th. The amount of heavy ammunition available at this time permitted only of an assault—and that on a very narrow front—by the IV. Corps, but the I. and Indian Corps, and the Second Army,² were directed to give such assistance as they could by subsidiary attacks.

The IV. Corps operation was to be carried out by the 7th and 51st Divisions, the Canadian Division forming a defensive flank on the right as the advance proceeded. The assault was preceded by 48 hours' slow bombardment for destruction of trenches and wire cutting, from 6 A.M. on the 13th to 6 A.M. on the 15th, followed by twelve hours' heavy fire.³ To economize ammunition, great attention

¹ A mine had been fired on the 3rd/4th June under the German salient south-west of Chapelle St. Roch and the crater occupied by two companies of the 1/6th Gordons (20th Brigade); but they were driven out after all their bombs were expended. Fighting continued in the area, and on the 12th, for rescuing a wounded officer under very heavy bomb and rifle fire, Lance-Corporal W. Angus, 1/8th Highland L.I. (attached 1/8th Royal Scots, 22nd Brigade) was awarded the V.C.

² See the attack on Bellewaarde, below.

³ The artillery available consisted of that of the three divisions, twenty 6-inch howitzers, three groups of French 75-mm., all under Br.-General J. F. N. Birch, with No. 1 Group H.A.R., under Br.-General G. McK. Franks, for counter-battery work.

15 June. was paid to air co-operation in artillery observation and tactical reconnaissance, and the wing of the R.F.C. with the First Army was reinforced for the occasion. Signals with Very lights and rockets were arranged to indicate the capture of the various German lines.

At the end of the bombardment, after a mine at the Duck's Bill, near the junction of the Canadian and the 7th Division fronts opposite Chapelle St. Roch, had been fired at 5.58 P.M., the infantry went forward.¹ The attack did not come as a surprise to the enemy; for, as zero hour approached, his artillery fire increased, which somewhat shook the troops in their assembly positions;² and a minute or two minutes before 6 P.M. his infantry manned the parapets and opened fire with machine gun and rifle.

The assault of the 7th Division was entrusted to the 21st Brigade (Br.-General H. E. Watts), led by the 2/Green Howards and 2/Wiltshire: that of the 51st Division to the 154th Brigade (Br.-General G. L. Hibbert) the 1/6th Scottish Rifles³ and 1/4th Loyal North Lancashire leading. The 1/Grenadier Guards (20th Brigade) connected the two attacks, and the 1st Canadian Battalion (Western Ontario Regiment) of the 1st Canadian Brigade⁴ moved out to form the defensive flank on the right, whilst a company of the 1/5th Seaforth Highlanders (152nd Brigade) attempted a flank attack from the left.

The attacks were made with great dash and gallantry, but no covering fire was arranged for and directly they were launched a thick row of rifles appeared over the German parapet.⁵ The enemy, indeed, seemed to know not only the exact frontage but the very moment of the attack. In spite of the heavy fire, and severe losses owing to little of the wire having been cut,⁶ the German trenches were

¹ This mine of 3000 lbs. of ammonal with 30 of guncotton interspersed had been placed by the 176th Tunnelling Company R.E.; it destroyed an enemy gallery.

² "Regt. No. 134", p. 24, particularly states that the German artillery support was "perfect".

³ The 1/6th Scottish Rifles had been sent to France in March and attached to the 8th Division, and had not long replaced the 2/5th Lancs. Fus. in the 154th Brigade. The rest of the 51st Division was in battle for the first time.

⁴ The 3rd Canadian Brigade was in divisional reserve, the 2nd in corps reserve.

⁵ The account in "Regt. No. 134" agrees with this.

⁶ Accounts differ as to this. One patch of wire which could not be attacked by 18-pdrs., being covered by a belt of trees, was satisfactorily cut by 4.5-inch howitzer H.E. shell. This was the first occasion on which howitzers were used for wire cutting.

entered at a number of places by both brigades, and some progress was made even beyond the front line; but the strong points were not captured and in the support trenches the German resistance stiffened. Here little damage had been done to the dug-outs under the parapet five or six feet below the ground, and the garrison was intact. The contest now became one of hand-grenades and trench weapons, and for this the British were still ill-equipped, being further handicapped by the fact that some of their advanced bomb stores had blown up. The persistency and efficiency of the German bombers contributed largely to the failure to hold what had been gained; but the main cause was the German cross-fire in No Man's Land. This made it well-nigh impossible, even after dusk, to send reinforcements or stores to the companies which had entered the German defences, and these were therefore left stranded. Crippled by heavy casualties among the officers,¹ the men nevertheless fought on. It was impossible to give them adequate artillery support and the general result was that they were gradually driven back, and by 3 A.M. only the 1/6th Scottish Rifles and a company of the 1/6th Seaforth Highlanders, sent up from the 152nd Brigade to help them, were in possession of the ground originally won. At 4 A.M. these troops were also compelled to retire.²

Arrangements had been made during the night to renew the attack at 5.30 A.M. on the 16th, after two hours' bombardment—which was all that the ammunition in hand permitted. The reorganization of the infantry, however, proved a lengthy process, and a thick morning mist prevented accurate artillery observation. The French, far from making progress on the 16th, called on the First

¹ The commanders of the 1/6th Scottish Rifles and 1/4th Loyal North Lancashire, Lieut.-Colonels W. Martin Kay and R. Hindle, and their adjutants, were wounded at the beginning of the assault. Of the 21 officers of the Scottish Rifles, only three were not casualties; the Loyal North Lancashire lost 12 officers; the 2/Green Howards lost 11 officers; the 2/Wiltshire, 9.

Lieutenant F. W. Campbell, 1st Canadian Battalion, who subsequently died of his wounds, managed to get one of his two machine guns to the German first line; then although almost all his detachment had been killed or wounded he maintained his position, and when the supply of bombs was exhausted, advanced his gun and succeeded in holding back an enemy counter-attack. He was awarded the V.C.

² According to "Regt. No. 134", pp. 24-7, the position attacked was held by II. and III. Battalions of the 134th, there being four companies of the II. in the front line. I. Battalion had the next sector south. The mine formed a crater 40 metres across. The account agrees with the British that the successful counter-attacks were made by bombing; it adds "a second attack at 8 P.M. was repulsed by fire". "The day brought the regiment heavy losses, but the enemy even heavier ones."

16 June. Army for assistance, for a German counter-attack was threatening against their left. The 47th Division, next to them, was warned to be prepared to render aid, and in view of these various hindrances, Sir H. Rawlinson decided to postpone further operations.

Under instructions from the First Army, after General Haig had visited Advanced G.H.Q. at Merville to confer as regards ammunition,¹ the assault was repeated at 4.45 P.M. on the 16th, all timings being 75 minutes earlier than on the 15th, except that the bombardment was limited to two hours. The enemy's front line when reached was to be consolidated, and no advance made beyond it until this had been done. The results, however, were even more disappointing than at the first attempt, the enemy again being fully prepared. The 3rd Canadian Battalion (Toronto Regt.), in the front line of the 1st Canadian Brigade, was unable to advance owing to heavy fire all along its front: in the 21st Brigade, a few of the 2/Bedfordshire managed to reach the crater blown on the 3rd/4th June, and some of the 2/R. Scots Fusiliers the enemy's wire; but by 5.30 P.M. they had been driven back to their own line. On the left, men of the 1/8th King's (Liverpool) of the 154th Brigade secured a lodgment, and its leading troops were gradually reinforced by small parties which rushed across under heavy fire, until about two companies were in possession. But towards 8 P.M., they, too, were forced out by a heavy counter-attack.²

A renewal of the attack was considered, but it was decided to postpone this until after a thorough artillery preparation, necessitating fresh registration by a good many batteries which had been firing on other targets. Orders were therefore issued that no further attack would take place before noon on the 17th.

On the morning of the 17th it appeared that the enemy

¹ The following table, showing the heavy ammunition on the L. of C. at various dates, indicates how the supply failed to keep up with demand:—

	4·5-inch lyddite.	60-pdr. lyddite.	6-inch.	8-inch.	9·2-inch.	15-inch.
11 June . . .	2,084	1,746	3,120	540	1,057	nil
16 „ . . .	2,350	990	2,711	410	635	32
19 „ . . .	1,070	1,000	3,624	350	565	68

² Of this attack, "Regt. No. 134", p. 26, says, that the line was reinforced by the reserve company of I. Battalion and three companies of the 57th Regiment. The account of the fighting agrees with the British. "The losses of the regiment on this day also were very heavy", and the II. Battalion had to be relieved by four companies of the 11th Jäger, 57th Regiment, and III. Battalion.

SKETCH 12.

SKETCH 12



had evacuated certain trenches, and it was therefore decided by General Rawlinson to put off the attack with a view to taking advantage of this to occupy a more forward position during the night from which to launch the assault at 3.5 A.M. on the 18th. When, however, the 7th and 51st Divisions endeavoured to carry out this preliminary movement, it was evident from the volume of fire that the enemy had reoccupied his trenches in strength, and the attempt had to be abandoned. At 4.5 A.M. on the 18th further offensive measures were postponed to the 19th.

At an interview between General Robertson, the Chief of the General Staff, and General Haig at the latter's headquarters at Chocques at 4.30 P.M. on the 18th, the former gave instructions that the First Army should consolidate its position, hold the Germans to its front, and gain ground if possible; but, as the Commander-in-Chief was most anxious to accord assistance to the French, two divisions (the 1st and 7th were selected) should be ready to move south to help them. On the 19th, however, Sir J. French, finding that General Foch had concluded his offensive and brought the Second Battle of Artois to an end, directed that no further attempt to gain ground should be made; for, now that the enemy was on the alert, an advance could only be achieved by incurring such losses in men and expending such an amount of ammunition as were altogether disproportionate to the gains.¹

SECOND ARMY: LOSS OF HOOGE CHATEAU, 2ND JUNE

Though the ruins of Hooge had been recovered in May, and the battles of Ypres brought, officially, to an end, the V. Corps line near the village was left in a dangerously weak situation, and the fighting in that area was by no means concluded. The front ran fairly straight from Kemmel northwards to Hooge chateau, but at that point it made a deep re-entrant, running back nearly a thousand yards to the north-west corner of Zouave Wood and then curving northwards to Railway Wood. Thus Hooge was left at the apex of a very acute salient. On the morning of the 2nd June the thousand yards of front up to and including the chateau, between the sectors of the 88rd and

¹ In the period 15th to 21st June the battle casualties in the IV. Corps were:—7th Division, 1,344; 51st Division, 1,665; Canadian Division, 802. Most of these were incurred on the 15th and 16th.

16 June. 8th Brigades, were held by regiments of the 3rd Cavalry Division (Major-General C. J. Briggs).¹

After a severe bombardment from 5 A.M. to noon, when only the two walls of the chateau and less of the stables remained standing, the Germans attacked from the north-east and captured both chateau and stables, but failed against the rest of the front. Two companies of the 1/Lincolnshire and a company of the 4/Royal Fusiliers of the 9th Brigade were sent up to reinforce, and on the night of the 3rd/4th recovered the stables, but were unable to regain the chateau.

SECOND ARMY: BELLEWAARDE, 16TH JUNE

Sketch From Bellewaarde ridge, situated on the eastern side
12. of the lake, the enemy was able to overlook the greater part of the ground east of Ypres. A minor operation—timed to coincide with and assist as a diversion the attacks at Givenchy described above—was therefore planned by the V. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir E. Allenby).² Its object was to improve the position by the capture of the ridge, which would deprive the enemy of observation, and at the same time straighten out the re-entrant in the British line between Hooge and Railway Wood. General Plumer (Second Army) attached No. 2 Group H.A.R., with a very limited allotment of ammunition,³ and No. 6 Squadron R.F.C. to the V. Corps for the attack.

The minor details of the operation were worked out with great care, and are of interest as showing the development of preparations for an attack. As a result of previous experience, all telegraph and telephone wires were laid in triplicate by different routes; communication, in conse-

¹ 2nd Life Guards, 10th Hussars, Royal Horse Guards, Royal Dragoons and 3rd Dragoon Guards with the King's Dragoon Guards (1st Indian Cavalry Division) attached.

² It consisted at the time of the 3rd and 50th Divisions and two brigades of the 14th Division.

³ The guns, with total allotment of ammunition, for the operation were:—

9-2-inch howitzers . . .	8	300 rounds.
6-inch guns . . .	2	100 "
6-inch howitzers . . .	8	450 "
60-pdrs.	8	1,200 "
4-7-inch	6	2,000 "

The divisional artillery employed included :

5-inch howitzers . . .	6	500 rounds.
4-5-inch howitzers . . .	12	2,000 "
18-pdrs.	66	12,000 "
2-75-inch	4	400 "

quence, remained unbroken throughout up to brigade head- 16 June. quarters, and for the greater part of the time to the front trenches. But to replace the wire circuits in case there should be breaks and interruptions, a system of visual signalling and a pigeon service were organized.¹ R.F.C. co-operation for patrolling and reporting, and for observation of artillery registration, was arranged; but although the aviators assisted greatly in "spotting" hostile batteries and observing fire on them, they could not help much in the co-operation of the guns with the infantry, as they were unable to distinguish friend from foe in the trenches.

On the front of attack the enemy's trenches were about fifty yards distant in the centre, and about two hundred on the flanks. The wire, being hidden for the most part by the remains of trees, was impossible to reach and cut with shrapnel; high explosive shell was therefore used and proved very effective, and the wire formed no obstacle to the assault. Eight lines of jumping-off trenches, four behind the front trenches and four behind the support line were dug; but, all the ground being under observation, they were discovered and ranged on by the enemy, and to save the troops from being heavily shelled whilst waiting for the assault it was decided to attack at dawn. The II. Corps on the south and the VI. Corps and French XXXVI. Corps on the north were directed to co-operate with artillery and rifle fire; but jumping-off trenches were not dug by them, nor other signs of attack simulated in their areas. Reliance was placed on surprise as to time rather than deception as to the place of attack. Unfortunately the German observation posts on Bellewaarde ridge were too far away to be taken in the first rush; they commanded all the ground over which the

¹ Pigeons obtained from a local loft had been used to carry intelligence messages as early as the battle of the Marne, and measures for the control and requisition of birds had been taken in hand as soon as the front settled down into trench warfare. They were used, still for intelligence purposes only, at First and Second Ypres. The first definite organization was the distribution in April 1915 of a small number of birds, with men trained to use them, to cavalry divisions and brigades. The proposal to use them when the normal communications were cut was made at the end of May 1915, and led to their use as mentioned in the text. The G.H.Q. letter asking for the authorization of a pigeon service is dated 3rd August 1915. At the battle of Loos, the I. Corps had 15 lofts of 8 birds each; in 1918 there were 20,000 birds, in charge of 380 experts under Major A. Waley, who had been detailed by the General Staff in 1915 to organize the service, and 90,000 men trained as fliers.

The organization of a messenger dog service was not taken up officially until July 1917.

16 June. advance was made, and as long as the Germans held them, they directed converging fire on it.

The actual assault was entrusted to the 9th and 7th Brigades of the 3rd Division (Major-General J. A. L. Haldane), which relieved the 8th Brigade in the line on the night of the 15th/16th, and formed up in four lines undiscovered by the enemy.¹ Each infantryman carried two extra bandoliers, a day's rations besides the iron ration, 2 empty sandbags and a waterproof sheet; 400 hand-grenades and 150 wire cutters and breakers per battalion were distributed, and two platoons per battalion had shovels slung on their backs.

The attack was divided into three stages: the first objective was the German front line; the second, the line of the road from Hooze to Bellewaarde Farm; and the final one the trench on the edge of the lake. After the first objective had been taken by the 1st Line of the 9th Brigade, the 2nd Line was to go through it and capture the second objective, the artillery lifting from the first objective to the second at a fixed hour, but remaining on the second until ordered to lift. The three battalions which took the first line, were to reorganize there, and eventually pass through the 2nd Line and capture the third objective, the artillery action conforming as before.

The bombardment was begun at 2.30 A.M. and continued, with pauses, until 4.15 A.M., when the artillery lifted, and the infantry assaulted and captured the German front line with very little resistance.² But as soon as the 2nd Line of the 9th Brigade, the Lincolnshire and Liverpool Scottish (nearly 2 companies of whom were already with the 1st Line, having attacked as they moved through Railway Wood on finding that the enemy front line opposite them had not been taken) rose, the Royal Irish Rifles of the 7th Brigade in the 3rd Line—who were in reserve and not to advance unless ordered—could not be restrained and rushed forward also, the H.A.C. in the trenches alongside them following suit. The spirit which prompted the movement was excellent, but the result was disastrous. The 3rd

¹ 1st Line, 9th Brigade (Br.-General W. Douglas Smith): 4/Royal Fusiliers, 1/Royal Scots Fusiliers and the 1/Northumberland Fusiliers, with the 1/Wiltshire (7th Brigade) to cover the right of the attack;

2nd Line: 1/Lincolnshire and 1/10th King's (Liverpool Scottish).

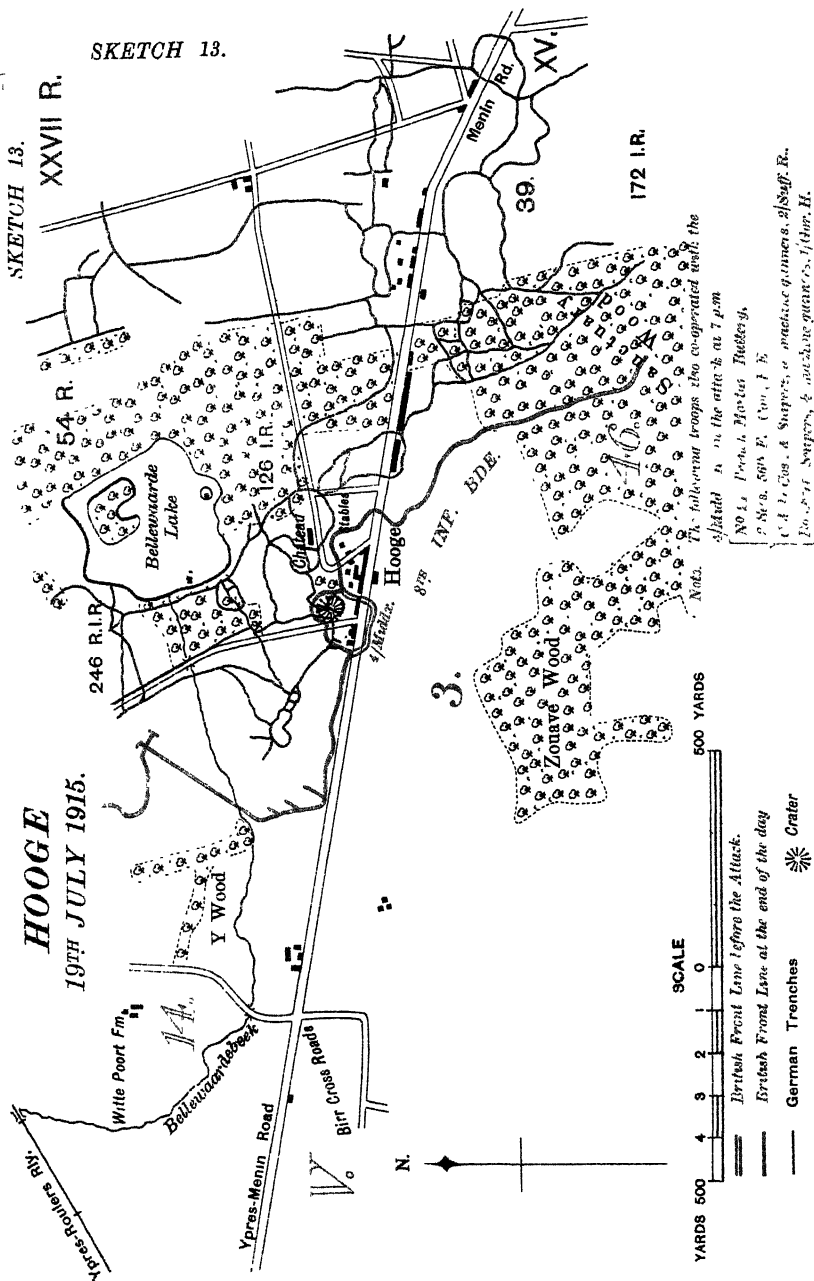
3rd and 4th Lines, 7th Brigade (Br.-General C. R. Ballard): H.A.C. and 2/R. Irish Rifles; 3/Worcestershire and 1/4th South Lancashire.

² 157 prisoners of the 246th and 248th Reserve Regiments of the XXVII. Reserve Corps and the 132nd Regiment of the XV. Corps were taken.

SKETCH 13.

XXVII R.

SKETCH 13.



Ordnance Survey, 1928

Line caught up the 2nd, which was waiting for the barrage to lift, and so fast did the four battalions push on, that they ran into their own artillery fire directed on the second objective, mist and smoke preventing the gunners from seeing what was happening. Upset by two battalions of the 7th Brigade unexpectedly passing through them, the Royal Fusiliers, Royal Scots Fusiliers and Northumberland Fusiliers reorganizing in the German front line preparatory to going through to the third objective, advanced too soon. The trenches grew crowded with men, units got mixed up, and it became almost impossible to organize or control the fight; and to add to the confusion, German artillery fire, very heavy and accurate, swept the battalions of the 3rd Division from three sides. Nevertheless, the German second line was reached, and some of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, Northumberland Fusiliers and most of the Liverpool Scottish actually got through to the final objective. A combat with bombs and bayonets in the network of trenches now ensued and swayed backwards and forwards. About 7.30 A.M. the enemy made a definite counter-attack, which was repulsed, and two further attempts later in the day were broken up by fire; but at 9.30 A.M., being still under very heavy shell fire and having no bombs left, the attackers fell back to the first line of German trenches, with the exception of the survivors of those companies who had reached the final objective and one of the parties of the 1/4th South Lancashire, used to reinforce, who hung on in trenches south and west of Bellewaarde farm till 3 P.M. At the same time the 1/Wiltshire, the right flank guard, which had gained ground towards Hooze in the German trenches by bombing, was also forced back to the Menin road, losing heavily in the open.

The 42nd Brigade (Br.-General C. J. Markham) of the 14th Division, assembled south-east of Ypres, had at 9 A.M. been ordered up by the V. Corps to support the 3rd Division. It was to make a decisive attack and confirm the success won; and to this end a new bombardment was begun, to terminate at 3.30 P.M. The brigade was directed to move into the fire zone at 1 P.M., but was then delayed by a particularly heavy barrage put down by the Germans for the very purpose of preventing reinforcements from coming up. The leading battalions therefore did not arrive in the front trenches until 4 P.M., and the attack was delivered at 3.30 P.M. by less than two battalions (3/Worcestershire and 2/R. Irish Rifles, reorganized as two companies) of

16 June. the 7th Brigade. With an open glacis slope in front of them, the two leading companies of the Worcestershire were immediately met by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, soon followed by shell fire; Lieut.-Colonel B. F. B. Stuart, the commanding officer, the officers leading, and many men fell, and the advance of the other companies was therefore stopped. On the left, the two companies of the R. Irish Rifles, starting from good cover on the eastern edge of Railway Wood, went forward most gallantly until destroyed by fire. Thus no further progress could be made, and eventually, at 6 P.M., it was decided to consolidate what had been previously gained, the German front line for half a mile between the Menin road and Railway Wood, and the area of No Man's Land behind. The re-entrant had been slightly reduced, and the British line had been carried forward to just north of the Menin road, but the enemy remained in possession of Bellewaarde ridge and the observation posts on it.

The 8th Brigade (Br.-General A. R. Hoskins) took over the line won, and the 7th, 9th and 42nd Brigades were withdrawn to rest. The casualties of the 3rd Division had been 140 officers and 3,391 men, and of this total the 9th Brigade had lost 73 officers out of 96, and 2,012 men out of 3,663.¹ These heavy losses were almost entirely due, like the casualties at "Second Ypres", to the enemy's artillery fire with which the British heavies, handicapped by inadequate and limited ammunition, were unable to cope. The Germans lost 157 prisoners and had some three hundred other casualties.

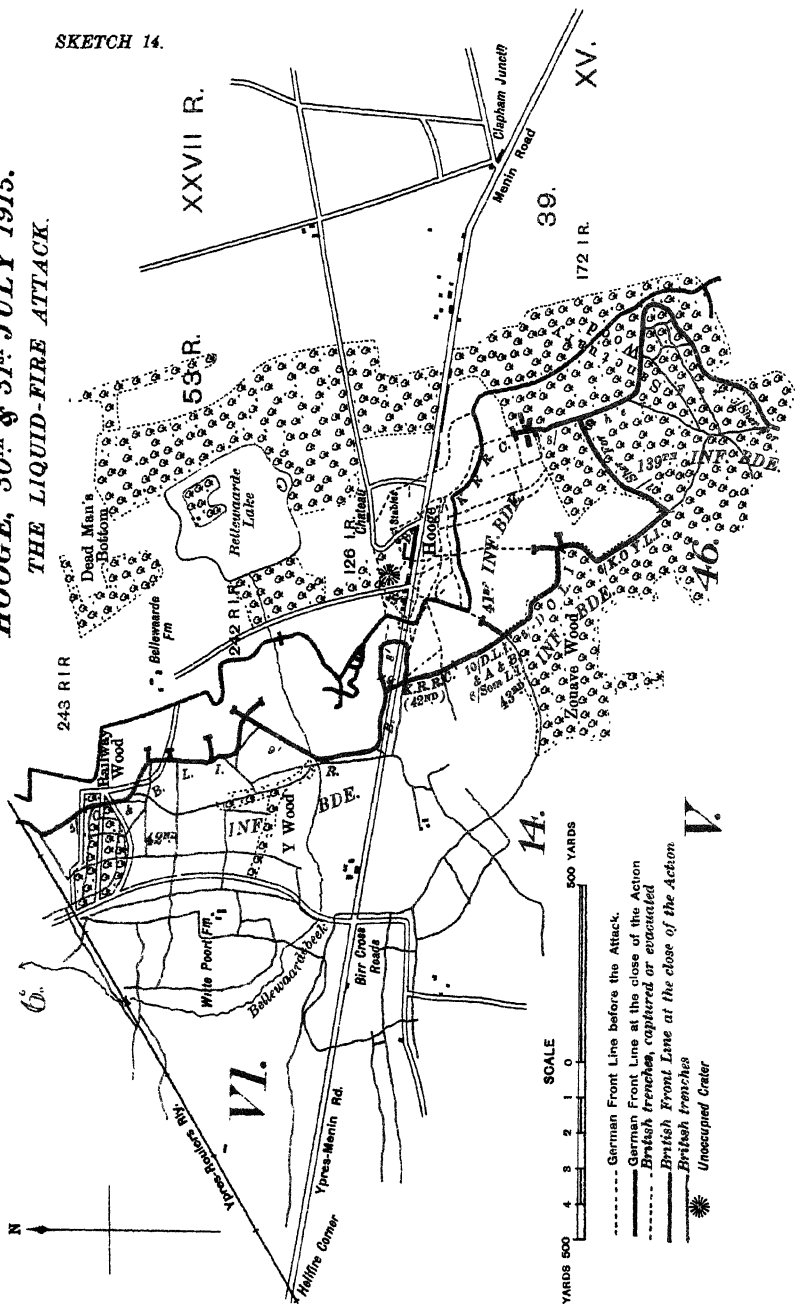
ACTIONS OF HOOGE: 19TH AND 30TH JULY AND 9TH AUGUST

Sketch 13. During the months of July and August three further combats took place in the Ypres area. On the 19th July the Germans still held the low lines of brick heaps which had once been Hooge chateau, but the site of the stables was in the hands of the British. From that point the British line broke westwards, crossing and re-crossing the Ypres—Menin road through the ruins of Hooge village, and then running up the road until four hundred yards

¹ The Liverpool Scottish, 21 officers and 378 men out of 23 and 570. Five lieutenant-colonels were wounded: in the 7th Brigade, B. F. B. Stuart of the 3/Worcestershire and E. Treffry of the H.A.C.; in the 9th Brigade, R. G. Hely-Hutchinson of the 4/Royal Fusiliers, C. Yatman of the 1/Northumberland Fusiliers and E. G. Thin of the Liverpool Scottish, whilst Major H. E. R. Boxer, commanding the 1/Lincolnshire, was killed.

HOOGE, 30TH & 31ST JULY 1915.
THE LIQUID-FIRE ATTACK.

XXVII R.



nearer Ypres it turned north again. No Man's Land was 19 July. some seventy to one hundred and fifty yards wide. Opposite the concavity of the line in Hooge was an enemy enclosed work—said by prisoners to be held by a company—and under this, in spite of considerable difficulties of sub-soil and water encountered in driving the gallery, a mine was successfully exploded at 7 P.M.¹

The crater, which had a lip fifteen feet above ground level and was approximately 120 feet wide and 20 feet deep, was immediately occupied by two companies of the 4/Middlesex (8th Brigade, 3rd Division). Fire not having been opened before the explosion, the attack came as a complete surprise to the Germans. Bombing parties of the 4/Middlesex, and of the 1/Gordon Highlanders of the same brigade, were able to drive back the enemy about three hundred yards; but they then had to give up two-thirds of their conquest, because they ran out of grenades and their rapid advance deprived them of artillery support, which was greatly required as the German gun fire was intense. Thanks in a large measure to the artillery of the 3rd, 14th and 46th Divisions and No. 2 Group H.A.R., which eventually succeeded in keeping down the enemy fire, the captured trenches near the crater were consolidated, and the line joined up to the British line at either end by communication trenches. The 8th Brigade lost four officers and 71 other ranks, and captured two officers (one artillery) and 18 men of the *126th Regiment*.

Two other attempts to seize important parts of the enemy's line near Hooge were made on the evening of the 22nd July. The first was directed a little to the east of the salient captured on the 19th, in the 3rd Division area; the other further north near Railway Wood, in the area of the 14th Division. Both were carried out without mining or other element of surprise and both failed, breaking down under heavy fire. In each case, two platoons, supported by bombers and an R.E. detachment, took part.²

Rumours of German retaliation, by an attack along *Sketch* the Menin road, were current on the 26th, but it did not 14.

¹ The mining operations were carried out by the 175th Tunnelling Company R.E. (Major S. H. Cowan). The gallery was 190 feet long, and the charge 3,500 lbs. of ammonal, which had to be laid in a chamber above the level of the gallery, which was six inches deep in water. Traces only of German mining were discovered, and prisoners stated that operations had been abandoned on account of water.

² In this period, on 25th July, for attacking three German aeroplanes, when flying alone, and bringing down two, Captain L. G. Hawker received the V.C.

30 July. take place until the morning of the 30th, and then against the Hooge sector, held by the 41st Brigade (Br.-General O. S. W. Nugent) of the 14th Division (Major-General V. Couper), which had taken over the sector a week before. The 8/Rifle Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel R. C. Maclachlan¹) held the front at the Hooge crater, with the 7/K.R.R.C. (Lieut.-Colonel G. A. P. Rennie) on its right. The crater itself was untenable, owing to constant trench-mortaring and "strafting", and the trenches, dry but dilapidated beyond measure, ran up to the lip on either side, with no definite connexion round the crater. The sector had an evil reputation for being subject to incessant sniping and bombing, besides trench-mortaring and shell-fire; but on the night of the 29th/30th, when the two battalions took over from the very tired and worn 7/Rifle Brigade and 8/K.R.R.C., there was ominous silence. No notice was taken by the enemy of the noise inseparable from a relief, and even a few bombs thrown by the new comers into the German trenches—in places only fifteen feet away—provoked no reply. Half an hour before dawn the trench garrison stood to arms and there was still complete quiet. Then at 3.15 A.M., with dramatic suddenness came the carefully planned German stroke. The site of the stables of the chateau was blown up, whilst a sudden hissing sound was heard by the two companies of the 8/Rifle Brigade on either side of the crater, and a bright crimson glare over the crater turned the whole scene red. Jets of flame as if from a line of powerful fire-hoses, spraying fire instead of water, shot across the front trenches of the Rifle Brigade and a thick black cloud formed. It was the first attack on the British with liquid fire.² At the same time fire of every other kind was opened: trench-mortar bombs and hand-grenades deluged the front trenches, machine-gun and shrapnel bullets swept the two communication trenches and the three hundred yards of open ground between the front and support lines in Sanctuary and Zouave Woods; high-explosive shell rained on these woods, whilst the

¹ Wounded on this day; and killed in action commanding the 112th Brigade on 11th August 1917.

² The "medium" liquid fire projectors (*Flammenwerfer*) used on this occasion—later there was a "small" and a "large" pattern—were cylinders containing an inflammatory mixture under pressure, with flexible tube nozzles, carried, like a portable fire extinguisher, strapped to the back of a man. The mixture was ignited at the nozzle, and produced a spurt of flame and then opaque black smoke, the incendiary effect not extending more than twenty-five or thirty yards.

ramparts of Ypres and all exits from the town were bombed anew. 30 July.

The surprise was complete and would probably have led to an entry even at the strongest part of the line. Most of the 8/Rifle Brigade in the front trenches were overwhelmed, the rest fell back gradually over the fire-swept open ground to the support line.¹ The enemy did not follow: he at once set about consolidating the trenches he had secured, and trying to increase his gain by attacking the 7/K.R.R.C. in front, flank and rear. There was desperate trench fighting, in which parties again brought up *Flammenwerfer*, but rapid fire was turned on to them at twenty yards' range, and the attempt to use them broke down. In the end, however, after several counter-attacks, all but a small sector of the K.R.R.C. trenches were lost.

The 42nd Brigade, on the left of the 41st, was not affected, and the 1/8th Sherwood Foresters (the left of the 46th Division) on the right, though attacked, managed to maintain its position. With the help of brigade reinforcements, the new line on the edge of the woods was held, and at 11.30 A.M., by order from the VI. Corps, Major-General V. Couper made arrangements for an assault at 2.45 P.M. to recover the lost ground. It was to be carried out by both 41st and 42nd Brigades (Br.-Generals O. S. W. Nugent and C. J. Markham),² after three-quarters of an hour's bombardment by the divisional artillery and No. 2 Group H.A.R.—feeble indeed after the German tornado, but still serving to encourage the assault—the 46th Division on the right and the 6th Division on the left co-operating by fire. The attack northwards of the 41st Brigade, with the 6/D.C.L.I. of the 43rd Brigade (Br.-General G. Cockburn) attached, failed, not a man getting within 150 yards of the Germans; but the attack eastwards by the 9/K.R.R.C. of the 42nd Brigade succeeded in regaining part of the lost trenches.

Three battalions of the 43rd Brigade then relieved those of the 41st which had suffered most. A new line was consolidated fifty yards inside the northern edge of Sanctuary Wood, and the north-east edge of Zouave Wood, with posts

¹ 2/Lieut. S. C. Woodroffe, 8/Rifle Brigade, awarded the V.C. for gallantry on this occasion, held his post until all his bombs were exhausted. He then withdrew his men, but a few hours later led them forward again to counter-attack under intense fire, when he was killed.

² The 7/Rifle Brigade and 8/K.R.R.C. of the 41st Brigade just out of the line were hurried back. The third brigade of the 14th Division, then in rest billets west of Vlamertinghe, was moved up to the Ypres ramparts in divisional reserve.

31 July. along the edge and connected up at either end to the 46th Division and 42nd Brigade by the 1/7th Sherwood Foresters and 9/K.R.R.C., respectively. At 2.20 A.M. violent rifle fire was opened from the German trenches in the woods, and there was an alarm that another attack with liquid fire was taking place. Nothing, however, happened except a half-hearted advance towards Zouave Wood which was driven back by machine-gun fire. No further efforts were made by either side on the 31st,¹ and in the afternoon the 41st Brigade was completely relieved by the 43rd.²

**Sketch
15.**

It was clear that nothing but a regular attack, thoroughly prepared—as distinguished from a hasty counter-attack—would dislodge the enemy, and the 6th Division (Major-General W. N. Congreve) of the VI. Corps, then north of the 14th Division and covering St. Jean, was selected to make it. The 6th Division was relieved during the 2nd-4th August by the 9th Brigade (3rd Division) and in its turn, quietly and unnoticed, took the place of the 14th, the transfer of command being completed on the 6th.³

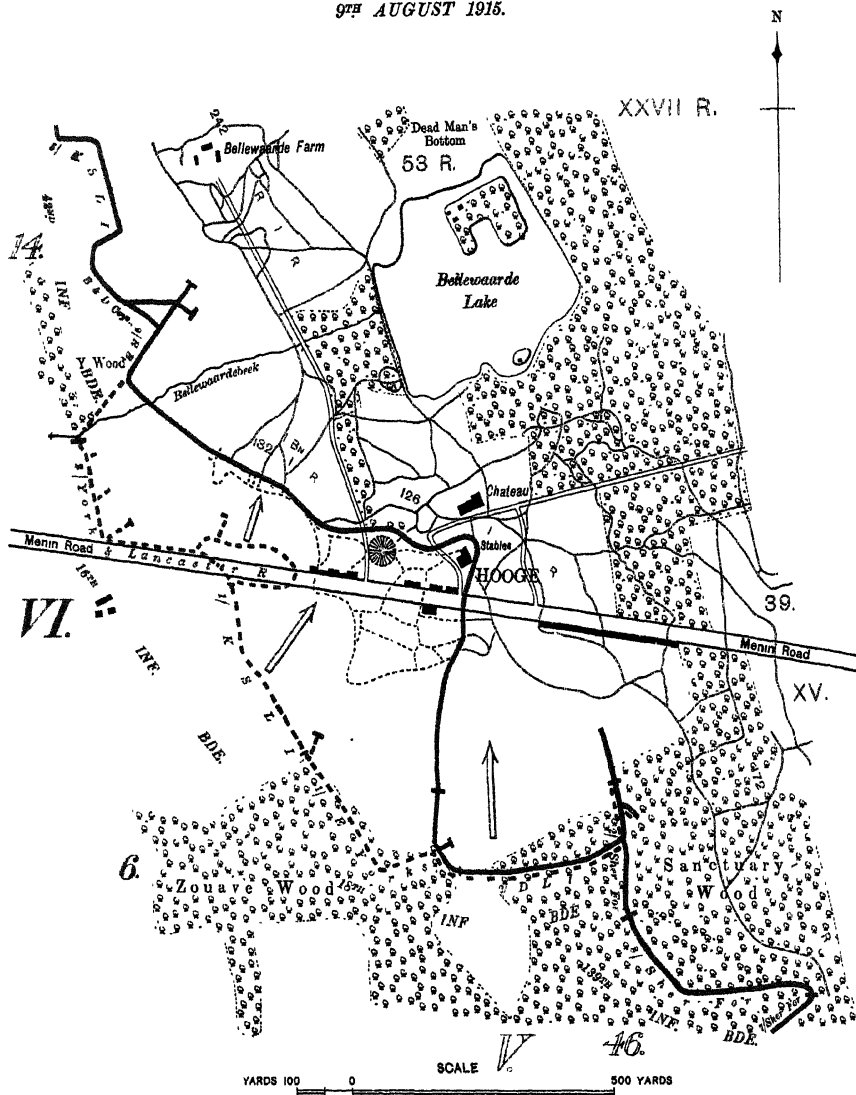
The attack was a model of its kind, took the enemy by surprise and was entirely successful: it marks further progress in the methods of minor operations. In the first place various demonstrations were made along the front of the Second Army to deceive the enemy as regards the intended point of attack. On the evening of the 8th August the 49th Division (Major-General E. M. Perceval), which held the left of the British line up to Boesinghe on the canal, in conjunction with the French XXXVI. Corps next to it, feigned the beginning of operations against Pilkem ridge; the 46th Division (Major-General the Hon. E. J. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley), to the south of the 6th, engaged Hill 60 to prevent it from being used for observa-

¹ On this day Captain J. A. Liddell, R.F.C., was awarded the V.C. for conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. When on a strategical reconnaissance he was severely wounded and his aeroplane badly damaged; but although continually fired at, he managed to bring his machine back.

² The 41st Brigade casualties for the 30th and 31st July were 55 officers and 1,181 other ranks; the 8/Rifle Brigade losing 19 and 462, the 7/K.R.R.C., 12 and 289, the 7/Rifle Brigade, 12 and 240, and 8/K.R.R.C. 12 and 190. The 42nd Brigade casualties were 27 officers and 625 other ranks, the 9/K.R.R.C. losing Lieut.-Colonel C. S. Chaplin, killed, and 16 other officers and 333 other ranks. The total casualties of the 14th Division were 100 officers and 2,387 other ranks.

³ On the 3rd August, at 2 A.M., 2nd Lieut. G. A. B. Rochfort, 1/Scots Guards, saved the lives of many of his working party in a communication trench near Quinchy by seizing and hurling over the parapet a German trench-mortar bomb that dropped alongside, although he could have stepped round a corner into safety. He received the V.C.

HOOGE. 9TH AUGUST 1915.



- British Line before the Attack
- British Line at the close of the Action
- ~~~~~ On m.m. Trenches
- Captured German Trenches



tion purposes; the 17th Division (Major-General T. D. 3 Aug. Pilcher), south of the 46th, dug jumping-off trenches in front of its parapets and assembly trenches in rear, with the result that the enemy concentrated fire on its front and communication trenches; the 28th Division (Major-General E. S. Bulfin), next on the right, also simulated the preparation of an assault, which brought down from the enemy a somewhat severe bombardment.

To mislead the enemy as to the time of attack, each morning from the 3rd August onwards his trenches were subjected to heavy shelling at an early hour, varied from day to day—3 to 4 A.M., 2 to 3.30 A.M., etc. So, when the final and real bombardment was carried out the Germans assumed it was only the normal "hate", to which they had become accustomed, and retired to their dug-outs.

The preparations of the 6th Division, the organization of its artillery support, in which two French "groupes" lent by the XXXVI. Corps (General Hély d'Oissel) and No. 2 Group H.A.R.¹ took part, and the arrangements for the assistance to be rendered by No. 3 Squadron R.F.C., were particularly thorough and complete. The instructions for the assault took up many typewritten sheets. This was a complete change from the short attack orders of the first days of the war, when, all ranks knowing the parts they had to play, a few details of time and place sufficed. No limit was set to the expenditure of ammunition, as had been the case in the attack of the 3rd Division on the 16th June, and this was an important factor in the result.²

The actual assault, a concentric one, was carried out on the 9th August by the 18th Brigade (temporarily commanded by Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Towsey, West Yorkshire), and the 16th Brigade (Br.-General C. L. Nicholson) of the 6th Division, with the 12th and 1/1st London Field Companies R.E. and two trench mortar batteries attached.³ The bombardment of the enemy's position was short and sharp, from 2.45 A.M. to 3.15 A.M. During the last part the assaulting troops, under the fire of the enemy's artillery

¹ V., IX., XI., and XIII. Heavy Brigades, with three 9.2-inch howitzers, two 8-inch howitzers, three 6-inch guns, eight 60-pdrs. and twelve 4.7-inch guns.

² See page 98. The amount of ammunition expended, excluding that of the useless 4.7-inch, was in the case of heavy guns and howitzers about half as much again, and in the field artillery twice as much as on the 16th June.

³ One at least of them had old weapons with the Napoleonic cypher on them.

9 Aug. which had opened in reply, deployed in the dark in No Man's Land, parallel to the objective; a necessary preliminary, as the distance between the front trenches varied from 500 yards on the right to 75 on the left. The leading men then crept forward to the limit that the covering artillery fire allowed, bombers slightly in advance moving up the old communication trenches. At 3.15 A.M., when the artillery lifted, both brigades with their battalions arranged in considerable depth advanced towards Hooge, the 18th northwards and the 16th north-eastwards, aiming to connect at the crater of the 19th June.

In the 18th Brigade the 2/Durham L.I. (Lieut.-Colonel M. D. Goring-Jones) led, followed by the 2/Sherwood Foresters (Major C. J. W. Hobbs), with the 1/East Yorkshire in support and the 1/16th London (Queen's Westminster Rifles) and 1/West Yorkshire in reserve. On the left, in the 16th Brigade, 1/King's Shropshire L.I. (Major E. B. Luard) and 2/York and Lancaster (Lieut.-Colonel W. F. Clemson) charged side by side, with the 1/Buffs in support and the 1/Leicestershire in reserve. The two assaults went right through, the leading officers and men being in the enemy front trench immediately—some even before—the barrage lifted; practically the only opposition came from a few bombers. The two brigades joined hands at the crater, where there was a *melée* of hand-to-hand fighting, and recovered the whole front of 700 yards that had been lost. Three officers and 130 men of the *126th* and *132nd Regiments* and 11 machine guns were taken,¹ and a large number of dead were found, over three hundred near the stables and two hundred near the crater.

The position was immediately consolidated, although in the wiring by daylight a number of the engineers became casualties. Some attempts at counter-attack were made by the enemy, but were at once broken up by the British artillery; and, thanks to assistance from the air, until 10.30 A.M., when the light became bad, his enfilade artillery fire was fairly well kept under.

Subsequently a very heavy enemy bombardment compelled the evacuation, during the night, of part of the trenches east of Hooge, so that the front ran from west to east north of the Menin road and included Hooge village, the crater and the stables of the chateau; thence it turned south to Zouave Wood, and east to the old line in Sanctuary

¹ Four companies of each of these regiments were in front line when the attack began.

Wood. The enemy was unable to occupy the ground vacated.¹

In this action an attempt was made for the first time to establish communication between divisional and brigade headquarters by portable wireless sets, but it proved unsuccessful. A few steel helmets also were tried experimentally. Their value was at once evident, but, as they were strange to the troops, some of the men wearing them were in the early morning mistaken for Germans and fired on by their comrades.

NOTE I

THE FRENCH FRONT : JUNE-SEPTEMBER 1915*

There was very considerable activity on the French front during the period covered by this chapter, with a number of encounters, in which the French, like the British, were handicapped, though in a less degree, by lack of munitions and heavy guns.

On the 7th June parts of the French XI. Corps attacked and captured the German salient at Touvent farm between Hébuterne and Serre on a front of a mile, and in fighting which continued up to the 18th June held it against counter-attacks. Further east, 6th-16th June, the salient south of Quennevières, between the Oise and the Aisne, was the scene of an attack on a front of four brigades, which brought a small gain of ground.³ In the Argonne the Germans attacked on the 20th June, and a series of fights went on until the 14th July, both sides losing very heavily; and as a consequence General Sarrail was removed on the 22nd July from the command of the French Third Army, and replaced by General Humbert.⁴ In Woevre there was almost continuous trench warfare in the woods of Ailly, Mort Mare and Le Pretre,⁵ whilst in Alsace the enemy was driven out of Metzeral, and Barrenkopf was captured. These local attacks, necessary as they were until a general offensive could be mounted, resulted in very heavy casualties and absorbed a vast quantity of the limited munitions available. The lack of any signal success somewhat shook the reputation of General Joffre with his Government, but in no way depressed the morale of his troops, as was to be shown, seven months later, at Verdun.

NOTE II

THE ECONOMIC WAR

The Economic War with the Central Powers may be said to date from the 4th August 1914, the day Great Britain declared war on

¹ The casualties in the two brigades, mainly caused by the German bombardment on the position won, were very heavy :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
16th Brigade	38	800
18th „	45	1,250

² See the French Official Account, Tome iii.

³ The French losses were 184 officers and 7,771 men.

⁴ The French losses were 653 officers and 81,742 men.

⁵ The French First Army lost 200 officers and 16,000 men between the 1st May and 20th June.

Germany. By virtue of the war orders to the fleet, cruiser squadrons were immediately stationed at the northern end of the North Sea and the western approaches to the Channel, and were instructed to capture German ships and to stop contraband cargoes with a German destination. The powers originally granted to the French and British squadrons were extended in some respects, modified in others, by the Declaration of London Orders in Council of 20th August and 29th October 1914. These were concerned mainly with the treatment of contraband goods ostensibly consigned to neutral countries.

On the 4th February 1915 a new situation was created by the German Government's declaration of a blockade of the British Isles. They announced their intention to sink all merchant ships sailing under the flags of the Allies in British waters, including the whole English Channel, and reserved for neutral shipping only a narrow passage along the Dutch coast and thence around the Shetlands. The avowed purpose of this policy was to prevent commodities of all kinds, including food for the civil population, from either reaching or leaving the British Isles or Northern France. The methods adopted in the following weeks by the German submarines ignored the international agreements regulating operations against commerce in time of war, and on the 1st March a joint Declaration was made by the British and French Governments ordering retaliatory measures to prevent all essential commodities from reaching or leaving the German Empire. The method adopted, however, was different. Whereas the Germans sunk the merchant ship at sight, regardless of the loss of life and irrespective of the nature of the cargo, the Allies simply held up the vessel, and, if necessary, disembarked and confiscated the cargo. They thus followed the usual custom in applying the rules of contraband. By an Order in Council of the 11th March 1915 the list of contraband goods was extended to include all material needed for the manufacture of munitions of war:—metals and chemicals for the production of explosives and ammunition, petrol, benzine and all the various lubricating oils, wool, hides and leather for making equipment; and all importable food supplies and forage for the subsistence of man and beast, such as tea, coffee, oilcake, grain, etc.

On the 3rd June 1915 and following days a conference, attended by delegates of the Allies, assembled in Paris to discuss the extension of the Economic War. Italy and Russia agreed to adopt lists of contraband goods similar to those of France and Great Britain, and a unification of methods between the Allies was urged. Further, a system of control was discussed whereby the exports to neutrals, particularly to Switzerland, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, would be limited to a monthly maximum fixed by the Customs returns of the last normal year, 1913. To act as a guarantee for the successful operation of this scheme, trusts, on the system of the Netherlands Oversea Trust, were to be constituted in the neutral countries concerned.

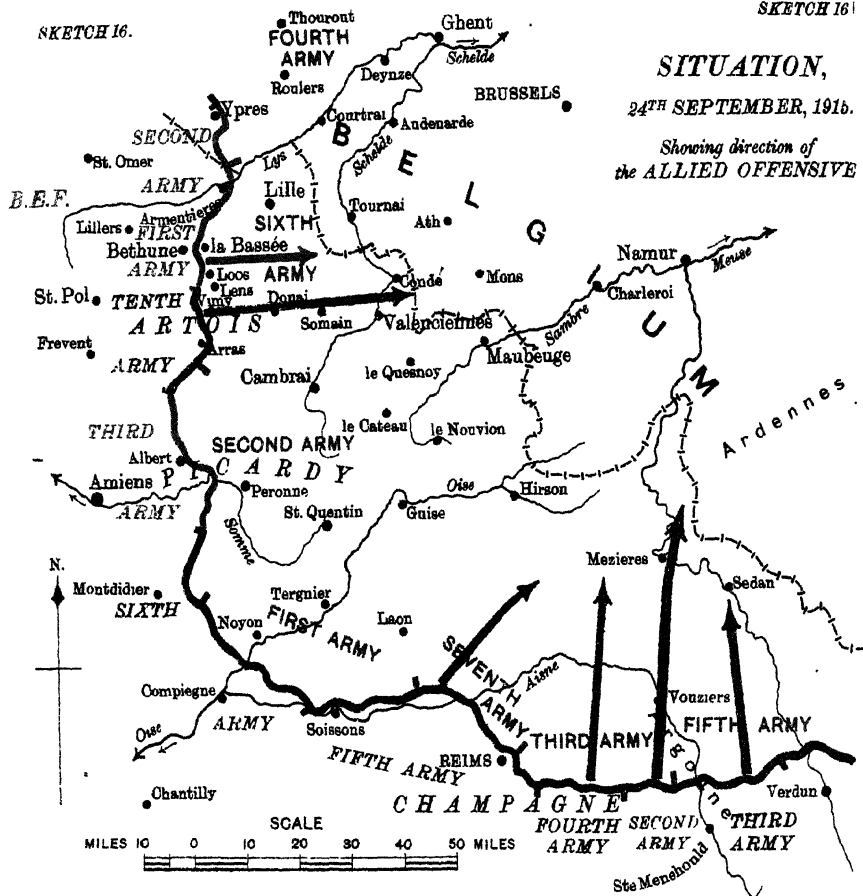
Great difficulties and opposition were encountered both with the foreign merchants and with the Governments of neutral countries, which caused much delay in putting this scheme into operation. Nevertheless, it marked the beginning of that gradual blockade of Central Europe which eventually was to prove effective and to play so considerable a part in the final victory.

SKETCH 16

SITUATION.

24TH SEPTEMBER, 1916.

Showing direction of
the ALLIED OFFENSIVE



CHAPTER VI

THE PRELIMINARIES OF THE BATTLE OF LOOS

THE DECISION TO ATTACK

(Maps 6, 7, 8 ; Sketches 1, 16, 17)

THE ORIGIN OF THE FRANCO-BRITISH OFFENSIVE IN ARTOIS AND IN CHAMPAGNE

BEFORE the Second Battle of Artois, 9th May-18th June, ^{Map 6.} had run its course, the plans of the French General Staff ^{Sketch 16.} for the culminating offensive of the 1915 campaign were nearing completion. The success of the enemy breakthrough in Galicia in May had greatly strengthened the hope that, given an adequate superiority of men, guns and ammunition, the German trench barrier in France would prove by no means so impregnable as it had begun to appear. Such a superiority General Joffre considered that the Allies would possess, provided the offensive was delivered before the return of the German mass of attack from Russia to the Western front. He still adhered to the general plan evolved in the early part of the year.¹

The German penetration into France and Belgium had left the invaders, between Verdun and the coast, in a great salient of which the apex was near Noyon. But whereas in May, owing to lack of men and material, General Joffre had been able to follow only one line of operations, from Artois, against the western face of the salient, he now proposed that the next stage of his offensive should comprise action along two of the three lines of advance selected : from Champagne northwards against the southern face, and from the Artois plateau eastwards.² The third, from

¹ See page 2 and " 1915 " Vol. I. pp. 66-9.

² In June and July, 16 new French divisions had been organized : 120th to 132nd, and the 10th, 15th and 16th Colonial Divisions. The men were mainly found by disbanding seven Territorial divisions and

June. the Verdun—Nancy sector northward, had still to be postponed; but it was expected that the double attack against two distant sectors, followed by a convergent advance, would isolate and bring about the destruction of the three German Armies (the Seventh, First and Second, comprising some 300,000 men) holding the part of the Noyon salient between those sectors, which was the keystone of the German battle-front in France. Strategically the situation of the three German Armies was specially precarious, in so far as all the main roads and railways that supplied their needs, after traversing the gap between the Ardennes and Dutch territory, swung southwards, and passed through the gateway formed by the plain of Douai, the twenty miles of low-lying country between the Artois plateau and the wooded mountainous area of the Ardennes. The French scheme was framed to take full advantage of this strategic weakness.

The offensive from Artois—as planned at the beginning of June—was therefore to be the main operation. It formed the natural sequel to the expected capture of Vimy ridge. From a commanding position along this ridge the French Tenth Army, reorganized and greatly reinforced with men and artillery, was to deliver an attack with its full weight eastwards from about Arras and Lens into and across the plain of Douai. An advance of from fifteen to twenty miles would effectively place it astride the communications and lines of retreat of the German Armies in the Noyon salient.

The offensive from Champagne was to be delivered from about Reims northwards along the foothills of the Ardennes, following the eastern border of the plain. Such an advance would isolate the German Armies in the Noyon salient from any lateral assistance from the east of Reims—for transporting which the Mezières—Hirson railway, forty miles from the French Champagne front, would be of great importance—and would take in flank and rear any opposition offered by the German reserves to the advance of the French Tenth Army into the plain of Douai.

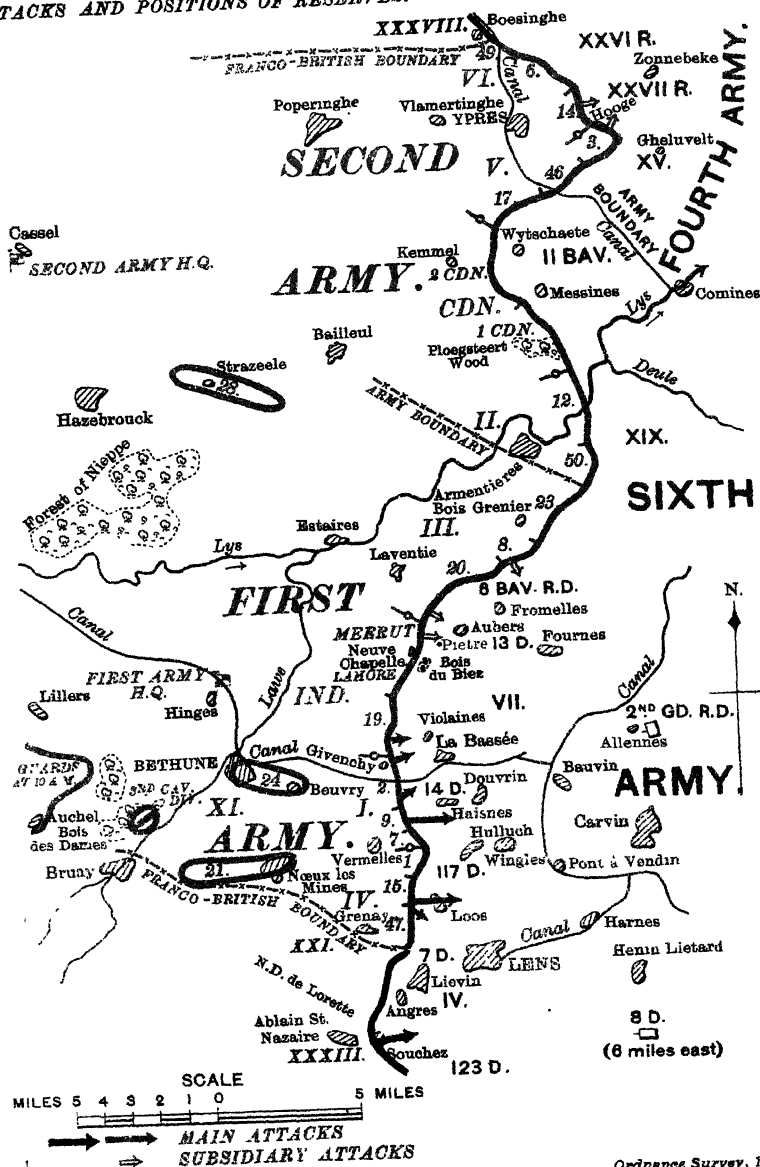
Whilst the mass of the infantry widened the gaps made in the German front and fought the German reserves, strong detachments of cavalry, supported by infantry in motor buses, were to be rushed through with all speed to more distant objectives, the final one for both offensives being the general line Mons—Namur, beyond the Belgian

reducing infantry companies from 220 to 200 men, but the French Army at the end of 1915 was about 200,000 stronger than in October 1914. French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 152.

SKETCH 17.
25TH SEPTEMBER 1915.

SKETCH 17. ⁷

GENERAL SITUATION: MAIN AND SUBSIDIARY
ATTACKS AND POSITIONS OF RESERVES.



Ordnance Survey, 1928

frontier. A successful break-through both in Champagne and Artois was to be followed immediately by a general offensive of all the French and British Armies on the Western front, which would "compel the Germans", in the words of General Joffre, "to retreat beyond the Meuse" and possibly end the war".

On the 4th June the French Commander-in-Chief sent a draft of his scheme to G.H.Q., expressing the wish that the arrangements for the combined offensive might be completed early in July. The British Expeditionary Force was asked to assist the operation in two ways:—By taking over 22 miles of the French line south of Arras, from Chaulnes (33 miles south of Arras) across the Somme to Hébuterne (13 miles S.S.W. of Arras),¹ in order to free for the offensive in Champagne the French Second Army (General Pétain²) then holding that sector of the line; and also by participating in the offensive of the French Tenth Army (General d'Urbal) from the Artois plateau by attacking either on its immediate left, north of Lens, or on its right, across the Somme uplands south of Arras.

Sir John French agreed to these proposals in principle, and, on the 19th June, in an interview with General Foch, now definitely commanding the Group of French Armies in the North (Groupe d'Armées du Nord, generally known as G.A.N.), said that the British preparations for the proposed offensive would, he hoped, be completed by the 10th July. He intended to co-operate by attacking north of Lens on the immediate left of the French Tenth Army, on a front from Grenay (4½ miles north-west of Lens) to the La Bassée canal, and his plan was to be an elaboration of that already proposed for supporting a French success between Lens and Arras.³ The 1st and 2nd Divisions were to be reinforced by at least two others, the 15th and 47th, and the units of the First Army re-arranged to ensure that the British offensive would be delivered by the best troops.

This accorded with the French scheme, and on the following day (20th June) the commander of the First Army was asked by G.H.Q. to submit a detailed project for the operations. In his reply on the 23rd June General

¹ Actually, as already mentioned, only 15 miles, from Curlu on the Somme to Hébuterne, were taken over by the newly formed Third Army.

² For his services in the Second Battle of Artois in command of the XXXIII. Corps, General Pétain had been promoted to the command of the Second Army, vacated by the advancement of General de Castelnau to command the Group of Armies of the Centre.

³ See page 4.

June. Haig wrote that, after a personal reconnaissance of the area south of the canal, he was forced to the conclusion—which proved only too well founded—that it was not a favourable one for an attack. The German defences were so strong that until a greatly increased establishment of heavy artillery was provided, they could only be taken by siege methods; that is by a series of progressive attacks from trench to trench which would involve hand-to-hand fighting and bombing. The ground, for the most part bare and open, would be so swept by machine-gun and rifle fire both from the German front trenches and the numerous fortified villages immediately behind them, that a rapid advance would be impossible. He added that the Germans had the superiority of artillery position and observation nearly everywhere south of the canal, and could concentrate the fire of their heavy batteries both to prevent the assembly of any considerable force for the proposed attack, and, if an assault were made, to enfilade it from both flanks. Moreover, the preliminary step of assembling a mass of troops south of the canal was rendered hazardous by the open nature of the country, and by the fact that newly made forming-up trenches in its chalky soil would be most difficult to conceal. If, however, an offensive on the left of the French Tenth Army was imperative, General Haig recommended that only subsidiary attacks should be made south of the canal, and that the main one should be directed astride and north of it, with a view to securing Auchy village ($1\frac{1}{4}$ miles south-west of La Bassée) and the spur that runs eastwards from Givenchy, thereby threatening Violaines and the town of La Bassée.

Sketch
17.

In submitting this proposal, General Haig pointed out that the shortage of heavy artillery and gun ammunition now dominated the situation; and he expressed his conviction that in the existing state of our ammunition resources,¹ it was of little use to make plans for offensives. Unfortunately, in spite of this out-spoken warning, the

¹ On the 1st June 1915 the amount of the principal kinds of gun ammunition actually in France, both on the British Lines of Communication and in the Field, was as follows:—

	Rounds per gun actually held.	Allowed by War Establishment.
18-pdr.	413	1,000
18-pdr.	573	1,000
15-pdr.	444	1,000
4-5-inch howitzer	240	800
60-pdr.	649	500
4-7-inch	298	500
6-inch howitzer	78	495

truth of which was evident and which was justified by June. events, continued pressure from General Joffre led to the offensive being eventually ordered.

THE BOULOGNE CONFERENCE

At this time a conference was in progress at Boulogne between the French and British Munitions Ministers and representatives from both French G.Q.G. and British G.H.Q.¹ at which the needs of modern armies in respect of artillery and ammunition to meet the changed conditions of warfare were discussed. The conclusions arrived at were important, and, taken in conjunction with the report of General Haig, were to have a vital influence on the point of view of G.H.Q. regarding the forthcoming operations.

In the first place, the recent fighting had shown that the field gun, the French 75-mm. and the British 18-pdr., was not powerful enough to destroy modern entrenchments, and that consequently a small force well entrenched and supported by machine guns, was able in every case to resist the attacks of greatly superior numbers.² It followed that a heavier form of artillery was required, and on a large scale, in order sufficiently to demolish the German trenches for assault. It was realized, in fact, that the provision of heavy ordnance had become a vital factor in the military situation. In this respect the Germans still maintained the superiority held by them at the outbreak of war,³ and at the time of the conference it was estimated that they possessed 3,350 heavy guns and howitzers (5·9-inch and over) out of a total of 10,500 pieces of artillery: that is, approximately, one-third of their artillery was of a heavy and super-heavy nature. The French, in order to rectify their initial deficiency, had given precedence in their munition programme to the provision of heavy ordnance; they were converting guns of heavy calibre taken from their warships and coast defences for use in the field, and making every effort to increase their manufacture. Nevertheless, as yet, they had only one heavy to every four field guns. It was clear that, since the Allies were now the attackers,

¹ Three conferences took place at the Hotel Dervaux, Boulogne; the first on the evening of the 19th June and the others in the morning and afternoon of the 20th June, all presided over by Mr. Lloyd George, then Minister of Munitions.

² At Aubers Ridge, for example, on the 9th May, 15 German companies with 22 machine guns had foiled the attack of 3 brigades of the I. and Indian Corps. See p. 21.

³ See "1915" Vol. I. Chapter III.

June. the German total must be not only reached but passed before an effective artillery superiority for offensive operations could be assured. The British Expeditionary Force was still far behind. Its proportion of artillery to bayonets at the time of the conference slightly exceeded that of the German army as a whole (5·7 as against 5·2 of all calibres to every 1,000 bayonets), but there were only seventy-one pieces of heavy ordnance, 6-inch and upwards,¹ with the Armies in France, compared with 1,406 field guns and light howitzers, a proportion of 1 to 20. The proportion agreed upon at the Conference as necessary for offensive operations under the new conditions was one heavy to every two light pieces,² and it was calculated that the necessary quantity could not be supplied by the armament factories then available before the summer of 1916.³

Secondly, and inseparable from the question of guns, was the supply of gun ammunition, and here, too, the Central Powers still held their initial advantage. It was stated on reliable authority that the Germans and Austrians together were turning out 250,000 rounds of gun ammunition per day, whereas the French figure now stood at 100,000 per day and the British at 22,000, and no important additions were yet being received from America.⁴ The French representatives hoped their figure would be increased to 150,000 within the next two or three months; but the British factories were still in the process of organization, and the results of the erection of national shell factories, one of the first acts of the Ministry of Munitions on its formation in June 1915, could not be expected to show themselves for ten or twelve months. For this period, therefore, the Central Powers would probably continue to hold their advantage. With regard to the amount of gun ammunition required for offensive operations on a large scale the French authorities at the Conference gave it as their opinion that in the sector of attack there should be 1,000 rounds for each heavy and 2,000 rounds for each field gun and light howitzer, provided always that on the remainder

¹ For details see next Chapter.

² The French authorities were, however, aiming at an equal number of heavy and field pieces.

³ In point of fact, the heavy artillery programme demanded by G.H.Q. (in a letter to the War Office dated 24th June 1916) was not completed by the end of the War.

⁴ Up to the 29th May 1915, shortly before the Ministry of Munitions took over, although about 26 million complete rounds had been ordered from abroad, only 804,864 had been received, of which 669,166 were 18-pdr. shrapnel.

of the front the supply should not fall below 200 rounds per **June.** heavy gun and 500 rounds per field gun. The British, at any rate, could not hope to attain this scale before the spring of 1916 at the earliest.

Thirdly, the failure of the previous offensives was largely attributed to the fact that they had been delivered—owing to the lack of both infantry and artillery—on too narrow a frontage: so much so that the German guns on the flanks had been able to take in enfilade almost the entire length of the attack front. It was considered essential therefore that future offensives should be conducted on a frontage sufficiently wide to eliminate this factor. This meant the assembly of a greater mass of troops in a given area which, again, involved the question of man power. The French army would be approaching the summit of its capacity, quality and quantity combined, by the coming autumn, but the mass of the contribution of the British Empire was only now beginning to arrive in France, and it was calculated that the New Army divisions would not be trained to their full offensive value before the spring or summer of the following year—1916. By March 1916 it was hoped that there would be fifty British divisions in the field, that is more than double the actual strength of the moment.

Taking these several important factors into consideration, the British military authorities arrived at the conclusion that an offensive on the Western front, if it was to have a reasonable chance of success, would have to be delivered on a continuous front of twenty-five miles, by a force of not less than thirty-six divisions, supported by 1,150 heavy guns and howitzers and the normal complement of field artillery. They maintained that this quantity of guns and the necessary ammunition could not be provided before the spring of 1916, and that, until then, it was preferable, whatever the general situation, to remain on the active defensive in the Western theatre of war.

Whilst the result of the Boulogne Conference caused an abatement of the interest of G.H.Q. in the offensive plans of the French General Staff, it in no way altered the determination of General Joffre to carry them out. The whole manhood of France was either concentrated on the battle front or engaged in the manufacture of war material, and all productive trade was practically at a standstill. This, together with the occupation of a very wealthy part of France by the enemy, exerted the strongest influence on the public mind, and there was a general wish that, given

July. the slightest chance of success, a supreme effort should be made to end the war before the coming winter.¹ General Joffre believed it could be done, and a vital difference of opinion therefore now arose between the French and British Headquarters.

THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE OFFENSIVE

At a conference at St. Omer, the headquarters of Sir John French, on the 11th July, the forthcoming operations were discussed between the Allied commanders. Not only did General Joffre disagree with the idea of postponing them until the spring of 1916, but also with the manner in which the British proposed to participate if they accepted his plans. In a letter he had urged Sir John French to "take a powerful offensive on the north of the French Tenth Army. Whilst avoiding the buildings and towns of Lens and of Liévin, your attack will find particularly favourable ground between Loos and La Bassée". He did not enter into any explanation of the reasons why he considered the ground favourable. Sir John French was fully in accord with General Haig's opinion that it was altogether unfavourable²; he made the latter's plan his own, and recommended that the weight of the British attack should be thrown on the north side of the Canal, some ten miles away from the left of the French Tenth Army. Yielding to General Joffre's expressed disapproval of this plan, Sir John French agreed to a compromise, and stated that the support desired of him would be given, provided the French advance south of Lens was sufficient to ensure that the enemy's artillery in the Lens area would be neutralized. In such a case the two subsidiary attacks to be made by the British south of the La Bassée canal would be strongly reinforced and converted, if necessary, into the main attack.

As regards the relief of the two French corps south of Arras, Sir John French stated that the British Government did not wish their forces to be separated, and that they would prefer that the New Army divisions, about to arrive in France, should relieve the French divisions now holding the front in the north near the Channel ports. General Joffre, however, would not agree to this, ruling that the

¹ Letter from French G.Q.G. to G.H.Q., 12th June 1915.

² Letter of 9th July 1915. For a description of the ground see Chapter VIII.

Nieuport—Boesinghe line, that formed part of the outer July. defences of the fortress of Dunkirk, must be held by French troops.¹

A proposal that when further British divisions arrived the B.E.F. should be divided into two distinct groups was definitely rejected; but G.H.Q. subsequently offered that the Third Army, about to be formed under General Sir Charles Monro, should gradually relieve the French XI. and XIV. Corps astride the Somme, as General Joffre desired—when only the French Tenth Army would temporarily separate the two wings—on condition that in the event of a serious German attack against that front the French would give the necessary support if and when required. To this General Joffre readily agreed, and it was arranged that the relief should begin on 18th July, and be completed by the 8th August.

In view of this date and of other equally important considerations, such as the additional time needed to assemble all the required material and ammunition and make the necessarily elaborate preparations, it was decided that the contemplated offensive must be postponed until the end of August.

THE ENEMY DEFENCE SYSTEM

In war delay is generally more advantageous to the defence than to the attack; so now, whilst the British and French were accumulating their heavy artillery and ammunition, the Germans were even more diligent in strengthening their defences. They realized no less clearly than the Allies, that, with an increased supply of heavy artillery and a greater volume of ammunition, Franco-British attacks like those of May and June 1915 might well break their present system of defence on the Western front. In all haste, therefore, they set about finding the appropriate counter-measures. Ignoring the precept of their peace-time manuals—one line of defence only and all efforts devoted to it—the plan adopted was to build a second defensive system from two to four miles in rear of the first, and of similar, if not greater, strength. This second system was most carefully sited, being placed wherever possible on reverse slopes,

¹ Actually the greater part of this line, from the Old Fort of Knocke to St. Georges, was held by the Belgian Army, with one French division of the XXXVI. Corps on each flank, and the 87th Territorial Division in reserve.

July. concealed from Allied artillery observation. In front of this second line was a barbed wire entanglement, some fifteen yards in breadth, more formidable than could be erected by night in No Man's Land, and of wire so stout that the wire-cutters of the French and British infantry could not cope with it. Since it was generally recognized at that time that wire-cutting by artillery could not be carried out at a range exceeding $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles (4,000 yards), it followed that the Allied field batteries could not get within that range of the second line wire as long as the first defence system held. In these circumstances, the Germans considered that even should the Allies succeed in breaking through the first defence system, a fresh attack would have to be prepared, artillery brought forward into new positions and infantry redistributed, before the second system could be dealt with. This enforced pause would, they believed, give them sufficient time to assemble reserves in the threatened sector, or, as the Russians had done during the German May offensive in Galicia, to construct other positions in rear of the second defence system.

Throughout July the preparation of this German second position was carried out at feverish speed ; French civilians, prisoners of war, and all available German troops not in the front line were employed on the work.¹ Early in the month, the appearance of the new position became known to the Allies from aeroplane photographs, but attempts to hinder its progress by artillery fire were of little avail. By the end of July it had assumed a definite form on the whole length of the Western front, and where the line itself was not complete, strong points and redoubts, containing emplacements for machine guns, had been prepared every few thousand yards.

THE FRÉVENT CONFERENCE

The existence of this new system of defence altered the aspect of the attack, and, after a very careful study of the ground, further increased Sir John French's doubts as to the possibility of success of any attack in the British sector south of the La Bassée canal. On the 22nd July, therefore,

¹ By The Hague Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, prisoners of war may not be employed on work in connexion with the operations of war, and the services demanded of civilian inhabitants must not involve their taking part in military operations against their own country (Articles 6 and 52).

he asked General Haig whether he wished to make any **July.** modification in his original scheme. "If you are still of the opinion", he wrote, "that the area between the French left and the La Bassée canal is not favourable for an attack, it will be for consideration whether we should not co-operate with our Ally by drawing off the enemy's reserves by an attack delivered further to the north". To this General Haig could only reply that the greater knowledge that he now possessed of the area in question merely confirmed his already expressed opinion that it was not favourable for attack. This opinion had been strengthened by information regarding the additions made during the previous six weeks to the German defences, which included a strong second line of defence and many improvements in the organization of the front line, especially near Auchy lez la Bassée. For these reasons, he still recommended the abandonment of any attack south of the canal, and advised that the proposed offensive should be "limited to the capture of the Aubers ridge [north of the canal], connecting it with our present line further north and extending it southwards towards the canal by attacking at the same time towards Violaines". Consideration also was given to the possibility of holding the existing front in less strength, and of moving the troops thus set free, about six divisions, to operate on the right of the French Tenth Army, south of Arras, where the enemy's defences were less strong and easier of attack. Sir John French, however, conceived that one of his main duties was to cover the Channel ports, and this idea was therefore dropped.

In view of General Haig's latest report, which Sir John **Map 8.** French accepted, a further conference with General Foch was arranged, in order to discuss a change of plan. This conference took place on the 27th July at Frévent, General Foch's headquarters. Sir John French made it clear that he had every desire to help the French Tenth Army, but he wished to select a point of attack more likely to lead to success than one immediately south of the La Bassée canal. As an alternative, he suggested not only an offensive against Aubers ridge, north-east of Neuve Chapelle, but another against the Wytschaete—Messines ridge, east of Kemmel. As an additional argument, he pointed out that, if the British had to spend the coming winter in Flanders, it would be a great advantage to deprive the enemy of the important facilities for observation over the Ypres Salient that he possessed at Messines, and, quite apart from tactical

July. considerations, to push the British line forward out of the water-logged valley of the Lys on to Aubers ridge.

General Foch, however, maintained it to be of vital importance that, regardless of the ground and strength of the enemy defences, the British First Army should make its main attack south of the canal in co-operation with the French, if only to ensure that the enemy's artillery should be actively counter-battered along the whole front of the joint attack. He admitted that a frontal attack against the towns of Liévin and Lens¹ had no chance whatever of success; but these localities occupied only four thousand yards of the sector in question, and would fall when enveloped from the flanks. He did not believe that a more distant offensive, either north of the La Bassée canal, or in the neighbourhood of Ypres, would produce the same effect, or give the same assistance to the French Tenth Army as an attack alongside it. Indeed, subsidiary attacks in trench warfare, at some distance from the flanks of a main attack were generally found ineffective for the purpose of drawing off enemy's reserves, as this narrative will show. To be of any use they required to be sufficiently powerful to carry out an independent break-through, and for this adequate means were not available in 1915. Moreover General Foch thought that if the British army attacked the Loos—Hulluch front, south of the canal, it would be able to gain a position which, combined with Vimy ridge which was to be seized by the French, would render the two armies masters of the plain of Douai, and force the enemy to fall back a considerable distance.

Sir John French remained unconvinced by these theories, which disregarded the nature of the ground and the other hard facts of the situation. He had now little faith in the great scheme of which the Artois offensive was a part. He considered that any Allied attack under existing conditions would, at best, but make another bulge or re-entrant in the German line. To break the line to such an extent that cavalry could be sent through in pursuit—the outstanding feature of General Joffre's scheme—was, to his mind, as it was to General Haig's, out of the question until the Allied superiority, both in men and guns, had been greatly increased. On the 29th July, therefore, he forwarded to General Joffre a summary of the indefinite results of the Frévent conference. He admitted

¹ The area Lens, Liévin and Loos was and is practically one town covered with pitheads and rows of miners' houses.

that on a former occasion he had agreed to attack on the **July**. immediate left of the French Tenth Army,¹ but that at that time he had not appreciated the great difficulties that an attack on Loos and Lens would entail. He now, however, believed that any considerable success south of the La Bassée canal, such as might result in gaining possession of the ground which commands Lens, was very improbable. Certain sectors north of the canal offered, he thought, infinitely greater tactical advantages for attack. He again pointed out that "the expulsion of the enemy from the Aubers ridge and from the Wytschaete—Messines ridge will not only permit the troops to occupy a much more favourable line for entrenchment under winter conditions, but the possession of these important ridges will be of the greatest advantage in the offensive operations in the early spring, which we hope will result in driving the enemy out of France and Belgium". In spite of General Foch's remarks on the subject, he still believed that a real success north of the canal would have greater effect in assisting the French Tenth Army than any support which he could afford it by attacking on its immediate left. The British Commander-in-Chief emphasized his conviction that General Joffre's plan was premature, and that an offensive with such far-reaching objectives was impracticable with the limited forces and material then available. At the same time, he took into account that the success of the offensive on the Eastern front would enable the Germans to withdraw troops from Russia for service in the West, so that a postponed Franco-British offensive might find much stronger enemy forces opposed to it. Having stated his opinion, he assured General Joffre that, whatever might be decided, the British army would assist the general operations in whatever manner and direction the French High Command thought best.

Sir John French's arguments were ineffective, and General Joffre, after consulting with General Foch, held to his original suggestion, which he now (5th August) repeated:—"It seems to me that no more favourable ground than that which extends from the north of Angres [west of and opposite to Liévin] to the La Bassée canal can be found on which to carry out the general offensive of the British army. Such an offensive delivered in the direction of the Loos—Hulluch ridge is in close touch with the attack of the French Tenth Army, and

¹ See page 113.

August. "turns from the north that mass of miners' houses and cottages, Lens—Liéven, which we shall outflank from the south. Our double attack will therefore result in our bringing a destructive fire from both sides against the agglomeration Lens—Liévin, and in silencing the enemy's artillery located there, which might, if we attacked alone, imperil our success. The experience of this war constantly shows the importance of attacking on wide fronts as the only means of preventing the enemy from concentrating his artillery fire from both flanks. The attack I have described fulfils this most important obligation, as we mutually cover our interior flanks. I am very strongly of the opinion that any British action in any other part of the line would merely be a separate and divergent effort, and therefore not so helpful to an attack in the Arras region. I agree therefore entirely on these several points with General Foch, and I cannot suggest a better direction of attack than the line Loos—Hulluch and the ground extending to the La Bassée canal, with final objective Hill 70 and Pont à Vendin."

On the 10th August Sir John French replied that General Joffre's letter had not caused him in any material degree to alter or modify his expressed opinion, that the British army could render more valuable assistance to the Western operations by attacking at some point north of the La Bassée canal. Nevertheless, he would now cease to press the point. "Since I promised that on receipt of your reply I would direct the movements of the British army in accordance with the wishes which you as Generalissimo expressed, I have no more to say as to the general plan."

Nevertheless, Sir John French by no means desired that the First Army should become involved in offensive operations on a large scale except in favourable circumstances. To fulfil his promise, he intended to co-operate at first by artillery fire alone, and, in accordance with the compromise,¹ to await the neutralization of the enemy's artillery in the Lens area by the French advance south of Lens before he committed his infantry to the attack. At the end of his letter to French G.Q.G. he made this clear: "I am therefore making all the necessary arrangements to afford you the support you request in the direction of Loos and Hulluch. With that object, I am reinforcing

¹ See page 118.

“ my First Army, and I have directed it to assist the attack August.
“ of your Tenth Army by neutralizing the enemy’s artillery,
“ and by holding the infantry on its front.” This attitude was a confirmation of the instructions that had been sent to General Haig three days previously (7th August).
“ The attack of the First Army is to be made chiefly with
“ artillery, and a large force of infantry is not to be launched
“ to the attack of objectives which are so strongly held as
“ to be liable to result in the sacrifice of many lives.”

General Joffre took immediate objection, and wrote (12th August) to Sir John French that the support of the British army could only be effective if it took the form of a large and powerful offensive, with the maximum forces available and—regardless of conditions—pressed home with every confidence in success. He again emphasized the immensity of the effort which the French Armies were preparing to make.

The situation was thus reaching a deadlock, when the course of events on the Eastern front, coupled with a step towards unity of command proposed by the French, brought about an agreement.

In view of the difficulties and loss of time which General Joffre had experienced in bringing Sir John French to his views, the French Commander-in-Chief had proposed on the 30th July to M. Millerand, the Minister of War, a formula which would give him certain powers, but take account of British susceptibilities by limiting any subordination to a precise and temporary object, viz.: the liberation of French territory. This formula ran:¹

“ During the period in which the operations of the
“ British army take place principally in French territory,
“ and contribute to the liberation of this territory, the
“ initiative in combined action of the French and British
“ forces devolves on the French Commander-in-Chief,
“ notably as concerning the effectives to be engaged, the
“ objectives to be attained, and the dates fixed for the
“ commencement of each operation. The Commander-
“ in-Chief of the British forces will of course fully retain
“ the choice of means of execution.”

By invitation of General Joffre, Lord Kitchener paid a visit to the French Army on the 16th, returning via G.H.Q. on the 19th August. On his arrival at Compiègne he was met by M. Millerand and had a prolonged conversation with General Joffre. He apparently agreed to the formula ;

¹ French Official Account, Tome iii. pp. 226 and 295.

August. for on the 20th, at a meeting of the Dardanelles Committee, the record refers in veiled language to a new and secret arrangement with the French.¹ In any case on the 26th August General Joffre was informed by M. Millerand that Lord Kitchener had accepted the formula. Lord Kitchener's complaisance, which settled the question of British co-operation in the coming offensive, was due to the general strategical situation.²

THE EFFECT OF THE RUSSIAN SITUATION

It was not only in France that critical decisions had to be faced by the Allies in those days of mid-August 1915, days full of disappointment to all who were responsible for the conduct of the war. Disaster threatened the Russian armies, and the French and British seemed powerless to avert it.

The failure of the first Italian offensive in June, together with the insignificant results of the French and British attacks in France at the same period, had sufficed to prove the strength of the defence under modern conditions, and the German General Staff had decided to remain on the defensive in France until the Russian Armies had been thoroughly crippled. By sending most of the new formations from the home depots to the Eastern front, General von Falkenhayn was able to assemble a force of 1,308,000 German and Austrian troops, of which 639,000 were German, for the summer campaign, against a total of 1,767,000 Russians. The numerical inferiority was, how-

¹ So far as can now be ascertained Lord Kitchener regarded the arrangement as purely temporary. He felt that nothing decisive could be achieved in France in 1915, and that it was best to fall in with French views, waiting until 1916 or 1917, when the British would have a much larger force in the field, before he asserted himself.

When, as will be related in due course, Sir Douglas Haig succeeded Sir John French as Commander-in-Chief, the formula, in consequence of the failure of the French plan, was dropped. Lord Kitchener wrote in the instructions sent to General Haig:—

"the closest co-operation of French and British as a united Army must be the governing policy; but I wish you distinctly to understand that your Command is an independent one, and that you will in no case come under the orders of any Allied general further than the co-operation with our Allies above referred to".

² In view of the decreased importance of the post of chief liaison officer with the French, on the 19th August Sir John French offered Lieut.-General Sir H. Wilson the command of a corps, which, however, he refused. He was appointed to one on the 22nd December 1915, when Sir John French laid down the command in France. On the 15th September the French Mission at British G.H.Q. was reduced in numbers.

ever, amply compensated for by the better armament, **August.** equipment and supply service of the Central Powers, and, more particularly, by their great superiority in heavy artillery and ammunition, essential for the successful assault of modern entrenched positions. The superior training and Staff work of the German Armies and of the German divisions which stiffened the Austrian front constituted, as ever, an important factor.

The preparations made during the latter part of June **Sketch 1.** for the renewed offensive on the Eastern front were on an unprecedented scale, and the campaign began early in July. The Russians were forced to abandon Warsaw and evacuate Poland, and by the beginning of September the Austro-German Armies were sixty miles east of Brest Litovsk.

In the opinion of the General Staff at the War Office in London, it was doubtful whether the Russian armies could hold out much longer. According to information from Petrograd, public opinion there was wavering; there were signs of friction between the democratic party and what may be called the Court party; and it was remembered that, for far less potent reasons than now existed the Government had ten years earlier concluded peace with Japan. It was clear that something had to be done to encourage the Russian nation, and to take the pressure off the Russian armies. It was not through any want of goodwill that this had not been already accomplished; but the great need, fully appreciated and yet apparently incapable of fulfilment throughout the spring and summer of 1915, had been a united control of the joint efforts and resources of the Allied countries. Instead of a single mind or directing body working on a consistent plan, there had been a multitude of counsellors, a series of compromises, and indecisive results. General Joffre's conference at Chantilly on the 7th July had, indeed, raised the thorny question of a united command,¹ but no action had been taken on it; for the rumours that he had a great offensive in contemplation did not inspire confidence.

Early in the year Lord Kitchener and the British Cabinet had favoured a strictly defensive policy on the Western front until Britain's New Armies were ready to take the field: that is until the spring of 1916. The Secretary of State for War agreed to the despatch of any men and material that could be spared to the Eastern Mediterranean, to reinforce the Gallipoli expedition which,

¹ See page 87.

August. if successful, would, he hoped, both give the required assistance to Russia and prevent the further spread of the war into Arabia and Egypt. In June, after the Boulogne Conference, the French and British Governments, with these objects in view, had practically decided to postpone the proposed offensive in France until the spring of 1916, and to make an effort to bring the Gallipoli campaign to a successful conclusion. With the men and artillery that could be spared at the time, if a defensive attitude were adopted on the Western front, such a result was considered practicable, whilst its effects, if successful, would be important and far reaching. General Joffre, however, had from the beginning opposed not only the Gallipoli campaign, but any enterprise outside the limits of the Western front. This he regarded as the one and only decisive theatre of war, and he therefore desired that every man, every gun and every round of ammunition of the Western Powers should be employed there. At the last moment he was able to persuade his Government to decline the British proposals and, instead, to insist on the carrying out on the Western front of the offensive that he had planned for the coming autumn. Owing to the disproportion at that time between the armed strengths of Britain and France, the British Government had necessarily to subordinate their plans to those of the French Government, and consequently gave way. On the other hand, Italy, none too well prepared for war, declined to join forces either in Gallipoli against the Turks, or in France against the Germans, and preferred to deliver her offensive across her own frontier against her own particular enemy, Austria.

The outcome was inevitable. Whilst the Central Powers had been able to concentrate their resources on one definite objective,¹ the crippling of Russia's offensive strength, the Allies were conducting offensive campaigns in three different theatres of war, none of which produced

¹ The armies of the Central Powers were, to all intents, under a single command. Nominally, for the sake of prestige, the Austrian Commander-in-Chief was independent, but until the last days of the reign of the Kaiser Franz Josef, when in 1916 Field-Marshal Conrad von Hötzendorf, the Austrian Chief of the General Staff, and Falkenhayn went their separate paths to Asiago and Verdun—and their own downfalls—the Germans got their own way without serious friction. After the advent of Kaiser Karl the situation changed, and in 1918 German requests were not complied with. For a full account of the arrangements see Novak's "Sturz der Mittelmächte" (inspired by Conrad) and Cramon's "Unser österreich-ungarischer Bundesgenosse". (General von Cramon was German plenipotentiary at Austro-Hungarian headquarters.)

positive results, or, as a whole, gave any assistance to August. Russia in her need.

Misfortunes seldom come singly, and in the black days of mid-August 1915 the Allies experienced the full results of distracted strategy and disconnected campaigns. With the news of defeat after defeat in Russia came word of the collapse of the second effort of the Italians to force the Austrian defences along the left bank of the Isonzo. At the same time arrived the reports of the failure of the advance from Anzac and Suvla Bay to reach the narrow neck of the Gallipoli Peninsula—the last great attempt of a gallant force, too weak in numbers, in artillery and in ammunition to deal with a problem of exceptional difficulty. The high hopes placed by the British Cabinet in the operations in Italy and Gallipoli could not now be fulfilled in time to prevent the crisis threatening Russia. During his visit to France in August Lord Kitchener told Sir John French that, in view of the renewed offensive of the Germans against the Russian Northern Armies, it was doubtful how much longer Russia could hold out. Up to the present, he explained, he had favoured a policy of active defence in France until such time as our forces were ready to strike. The situation which had arisen in Russia had, however, caused him to modify this view, and he now felt that the Allies must act vigorously on the Western front in order, if possible, to take some of the pressure off Russia. He had decided that “we must act with all energy and do our utmost to help France in their offensive, even though by so doing we may suffer very heavy losses”. On his return to London he was greeted by the news of the fall of the fortress of Novo Georgievsk, the last Russian foothold on the Vistula, and on the following day (21st August), he telegraphed to Sir John French confirming his conversation and telling him “to take the offensive and act vigorously”.

Under pressure from Lord Kitchener at home due to the general position of the Allies, and from Generals Joffre and Foch in France, due to the local situation in France, the British Commander-in-Chief was therefore compelled to undertake operations before he was ready, over ground that was most unfavourable, against the better judgment of himself and of General Haig, and, as we shall see, with no more than a quarter of the troops, 9 divisions instead of 36, that he considered necessary for a successful attack. Acting at once on the instructions of the Secretary of State

August. for War, Sir John French informed General Joffre at a meeting on the day following their receipt (22nd August) that the First Army would attack with all the resources at its disposal, south of the La Bassée canal, supported by about eight hundred guns. General Joffre expressed his satisfaction, and said that, owing to the Russian situation, he wished all the assaulting troops, both French and British, to be ready to begin the attack on the 8th September. Sir John French agreed to this date.

The preparations for the offensive in Champagne proved, however, more difficult than had been anticipated. Owing to the formidable defensive centres that villages in German hands had provided in previous offensives, the French General Staff had selected a new battle ground as free as possible of human habitation. But the very absence of villages meant a corresponding absence of roads, many miles of which had to be constructed in order to supply the assaulting troops with their requirements. These roads were not yet completed, and on the 31st August General Joffre informed Sir John French that the French infantry attack could not be delivered before the 15th September; a date that, on the 4th September, was again postponed for ten days, to the 25th.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRELIMINARIES OF THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*concluded*)

(Maps 6, 7, 8 ; Sketchs 16, 17, 18)

THE PLAN OF OPERATIONS

THE distribution of the German Armies left on the Western front during the offensive in Russia was well considered, by no means uniform or regular. The two hundred miles of front from Switzerland to abreast of Verdun, mostly in the hilly, wooded country of the Vosges, was held by 30 divisions (say a division to 7 miles), mainly *Ersatz* and *Landsturm* troops, reinforced by a certain number of resting formations. These troops were organized into three Army Detachments under Generals von Gaede, von Falkenhausen and von Strantz, that of Falkenhausen including the garrison of Metz. The remaining 270 miles of front, from Verdun to the sea, were held by 72 divisions (say a division to $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles) and divided between seven Armies.¹ From Verdun to Reims 83 miles, was held by the *Fifth* and *Third Armies*, with 19 divisions (a division to $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles); the Noyon Salient, between Reims and Arras, 125 miles, by the *Seventh*, *First* and *Second Armies*, with 23 divisions (a division to $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles); and from Arras to the coast,

Map 6.
Sketch 16.

	Commander.	Strength in Divisions.	Frontage in miles.
<i>Fifth Army</i>	Crown Prince Wilhelm of Prussia	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	50
<i>Third „</i>	General von Einem	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	33
<i>Seventh Army</i>	General von Heeringen	5	25
<i>First „</i>	General von Fabeck	7	50
<i>Second „</i>	General Fritz von Below	11	50
<i>Sixth „</i>	Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria	16	35
<i>Fourth „</i>	Duke Albrecht of Württemberg	14	30
		72	

There was no Supreme Command reserve in France ; but a few divisions in Army reserves were at the disposal of O.H.L.

Sept. 65 miles, by the *Sixth* and *Fourth Armies*, with 30 divisions (a division to 2½ miles). Thus the sector opposite the French Tenth Army and the B.E.F., where the Allied offensives had taken place in May-June and the German communications were most vulnerable, and the Champagne front, covering the Ardennes, were more strongly held than the Noyon Salient itself.¹ The German dispositions were accurately known to the Allied General Staffs.

General von Falkenhayn, the Chief of the German General Staff, had expected the Allied attacks to be resumed in July; but their failure to materialize led him in August to doubt whether any more would be undertaken, now that they would be of no great assistance to the Russians, already driven out of Galicia and Poland. For a time the Allied preparations, which were marked and obvious, particularly in Champagne, were regarded as a feint. "However, from the beginning of September onwards, more and more frequent reports went to show that we [the Germans] had to expect an early attack by the British, supported by the French, in the neighbourhood of Lille, with a simultaneous offensive by the French in Champagne".² The *Guard* and *X. Corps* on the Eastern front were accordingly brought out of the line and entrained for Belgium during the 15th-17th September;³ but this movement did not come to the knowledge of the Allies until the battle had begun.

At a conference at Chantilly on the 14th September General Joffre gave a final exposition of his plan of the offensive to Sir John French and the commanders of Groups of Armies, Generals de Castelnau, Foch and Dubail.⁴ The French Armies, he said, were approaching the summit of their strength,⁵ and the New Armies raised in the United Kingdom were beginning to arrive in France. On the other hand, the Germans had now massed one-third of their armed forces against Russia. Consequently, it was calculated that they had an effective strength of only 800,000 rifles on the Western front to oppose 1,185,000 of the Allies (875,000 French, 255,000 British and 55,000

¹ It will be observed that although the B.E.F. was not holding a very large proportion of the front in miles it was keeping occupied a larger proportion of German divisions.

² Falkenhayn, pp. 166-7.

³ See Note III. Chapter IX. for particulars of the move.

⁴ The Memorandum he issued on this occasion is given as Appendix 14, in the translation found in the G.H.Q. files.

⁵ See page 111.

Belgian).¹ General Joffre therefore considered the moment **Sept.** most propitious for the Allies to make a vigorous offensive on the Western front, and expressed his confidence in a great and possibly complete victory. By weakening certain sectors of the front and massing in great strength at the points of attack the numerical superiority of the Allies on the battlefield, already nearly three to two, would be more than trebled, that is would become five or six to one, for the first infantry assault. Since the previous Allied attacks in May and June, the establishment and capacity of the Allied artillery, especially in heavy ordnance,² had been increased. He therefore believed that the preliminary bombardment of the German defences, which was to be of an unprecedented severity, would enable the numerical superiority of the infantry to prove decisive.

The plan of operations in its final shape was similar to that discussed earlier in the year,³ and consisted, as before, of two simultaneous offensives directed concentrically from Artois and from Champagne in the common direction of Namur. But there was an important change: the Artois offensive was no longer the main one. In

¹ In August 1915 the distribution of divisions of the opposing forces on the Western front was as follows:—

Germany: 102 divisions (and 67 on the Eastern and Italian fronts);

France: 98 divisions;

British Empire: 28 divisions (Regular, 11; Territorial, 6; New Army and Canadian, 9; Indian, 2);

Belgium: 6 divisions.

How the figure 255,000 rifles was arrived at is not known. The mobilized military forces of the Empire, excluding Indians, on the 25th September were, according to a War Office return:—

In France	916,605
In Mediterranean and Egypt (excluding reinforcements)	191,682
In British East Africa	19,222
British troops in India	40,197
British troops in Colonies	21,635
At home:	
Regulars	830,209
Territorials	552,905

2,572,455

² The British heavy artillery (6-inch and upwards) had certainly been doubled, as will be seen by comparison of figures on 9th June and 25th September. But it was not all available for use on the First Army front, and in total was far below what was considered necessary by the Boulogne Conference (see page 115).

	15-inch how.	9-2-inch how.	8-inch how.	6-inch how.	6-inch gun B.L.C.	6-inch Mk. VII.	Total.
9th June	3	14	4	40	10	0	71
25th Sept.	3	22	40	64	10	8	147

In addition, the 60-pdrs. (5-inch) had been increased from 36 to 80.

³ See pages 111-3.

Sept. consequence of the failure of the French Tenth Army to capture Vimy ridge during the fighting of May and June, the Germans were still in possession of that high ground. From it they could command and keep under constant observation the area, with the communications leading to it, on the Artois plateau, where the French General Staff had intended to assemble the great mass of artillery and infantry required for the offensive as originally planned. General Joffre had therefore felt compelled to reduce the strength of the attack from the Arras and Lens sector, although it was there that the enemy was strongest, and make a corresponding increase in the weight of the offensive to be delivered from Champagne. In a numerical sense, he said, the latter now became the more important of the two operations. It was, in fact, a very important change, which the ground rather than the general strategic situation of the enemy appeared to warrant; for in addition to the enemy's observation advantages in Artois, the battle area there was covered with defended villages such as had given the French great trouble to capture in May, whilst Champagne contained few localities capable of defence. "The tactical advantage of not having to storm "villages against which our heavy artillery is still impotent",¹ turned the scale. Summarized, the details of the revised plan were as follows :—

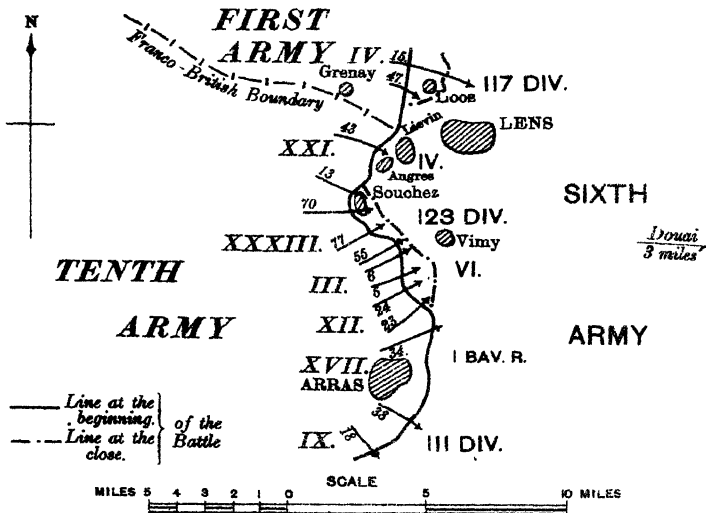
From Artois a combined French and British offensive was to be delivered eastwards across the plain of Douai against the front of the German *Sixth Army*. From Champagne the French were to attack northwards across the foothills of the Ardennes, west of the Meuse, against the front of the German *Third Army*. If both offensives were successful, the three German Armies holding the Noyon Salient itself would be cut off from their lines of retreat, and isolated from the assistance of the other sectors of the front. After breaking through in Artois and in Champagne, General Joffre's immediate intention was to prevent the enemy re-establishing his line and then to defeat his divided forces in detail.

Sketch
18.

The Artois offensive was to be delivered under the supervision of General Foch by the French Tenth Army and the British First Army, on a frontage of twenty miles between Arras and the La Bassée canal. The artillery bombardment was to be directed on the whole of this sector; but, owing to the difficulty of a frontal attack against the mass of

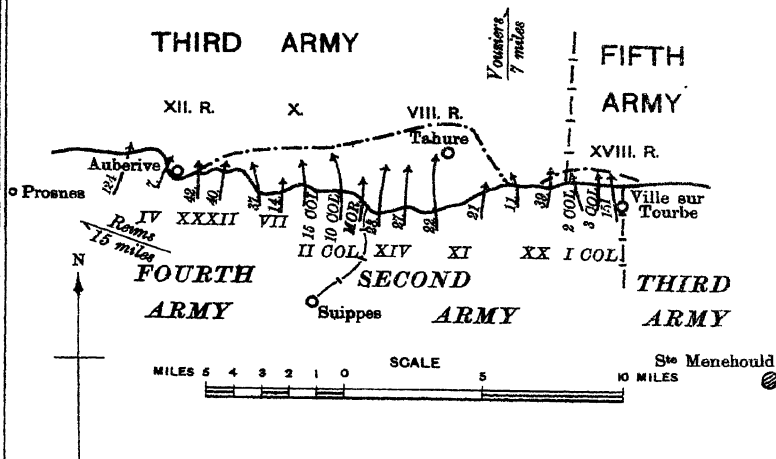
¹ French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 188.

SKETCH 18.



FRENCH OFFENSIVE IN CHAMPAGNE.

25TH SEPT. - 16TH NOV. 1915.



buildings forming the united towns of Liévin, Lens and Loos, the French Territorial division holding the 4,000 yards of front Angres—Grenay facing Liévin—Lens was to remain on the defensive until the attacks from north and south had forced the Germans to evacuate it.

To the south, between Angres and Arras, the French Tenth Army, under General d'Urbal, was to attack with seventeen infantry divisions on a twelve-mile frontage, supported by 420 heavy guns.¹ Two cavalry divisions were to be ready to press through any gap made in the German defences.

To the north, from Grenay to the La Bassée canal, the **Sketch** attack was to be made on a frontage of six miles by six ^{17.} divisions of the British First Army, supported by 70 heavy guns (6-inch and upwards) or 114 if the 60-pdrs. and 4.7-inch guns are included.² In addition, three British divisions were to be held close at hand in general reserve, whilst the Cavalry Corps and the Indian Cavalry Corps were to be ready to pass through the attacking troops if the assault were successful. After a year of war the contribution of the British Empire to the great offensive which was to expel the Germans from France was no more than nine divisions and five cavalry divisions.

The two offensives were to be directed eastwards towards Tournai, Valenciennes and Le Quesnoy, the cavalry pressing on across the Belgian frontier towards Mons.

For the Champagne offensive, as planned, thirty-four **Sketch** infantry and eight cavalry divisions had been assembled ^{18.} under the direction of General de Castelnau.³ Of these, twenty-seven infantry and six cavalry divisions, under General Pétain (Second Army) supported by 850 heavy guns, were to deliver the main assault on a frontage of eighteen miles, east of Reims between Ville sur Tourbe and Prosnes. The remainder, under General de Langle de Cary (Fourth Army), were to make a subsidiary attack on a frontage of four miles west of Reims, near Berry au Bac.

The disparity between the artillery available to prepare and support the French and British attacks respectively was most marked. The field artillery of each British division covered a mile of frontage, with 19 heavy guns in

¹ And 670 field guns. French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 536.

² See Chapter IX.

³ The attack was actually made on a narrower front than described here. The details are given in Note II. Chapter XIV.

Sept. support, whilst that of the French Second, Fourth and Tenth Armies covered two-thirds, four-sevenths and three-quarters of a mile, respectively per division, with 47 heavy guns per mile in Champagne and 35 in Artois. The deficiency of heavy guns in the British First Army was striking, and was not compensated by a superabundance of munitions.

The objective of the Champagne offensive lay northwards in the general direction Sedan—Le Nouvion, straight across the undulating country that slopes gently westward from the Meuse to the Oise and the plain of Douai. The cavalry was to push on across the Belgian frontier towards Namur.

Subsidiary attacks were to be delivered by each of the remaining French and British Armies on the Western front in order to hold the enemy's infantry and reserves, and prevent their withdrawal from the fronts thus attacked.

The offensives, both in Artois and in Champagne, were to be conducted on similar lines. They were to begin with a day and night deliberate bombardment lasting 96 hours in order to prepare the enemy's positions for assault. The fire was to be controlled throughout on a methodical plan, and the enemy's artillery to be attacked as vigorously as his defences, special batteries being detailed for counter-battery work. The field batteries were to be employed chiefly in cutting the wire on the whole front of attack, whilst the fire of the heavy batteries was to be concentrated on the destruction of those points in the enemy's line most likely to hinder the advance, such as machine-gun emplacements, fortified houses and redoubts, and artillery observation posts. The array of heavy guns and howitzers was, in fact, to be one of the chief features of the operations: in the preliminary bombardment, to demolish strong points; and in the subsequent advance, to break down any enemy resistance in the houses and villages, where the cellars provided safe shelter against field guns. It was realized that, owing to the limited amount of artillery and ammunition available, a thorough destruction of the enemy's trenches was not practicable; but it was hoped that the amount of shell to be poured on the German defences would enable the infantry assault to succeed without undue loss.

After a final and intense four-hour bombardment of the German front defences, the infantry assault, both in Artois and in Champagne, was to be delivered on the

morning of the 25th September at the same hour. There **Sept.** was to be no hesitation or delay, simply a tornado of shell and then the advance of an irresistible mass of infantry. The assault was to be pressed with the utmost violence, and for this purpose the assaulting divisions were to be assembled in great depth, all rear formations moving forward simultaneously with the front line of assault, a method that was later to become one of the first principles of offensive tactics. Each French division was to be allotted an attack frontage of approximately 1,500 yards, that is eight men to a yard, and when deployed occupying a depth of 3,000 to 4,000 yards. The leading battalions of each assaulting brigade were to deploy a half-company, or, at most, a company in their first line, the other battalions following in support in similar deep formation. Theoretically, the advance was to develop into a continuous forward movement of successive lines of infantry at fifty paces distance. There would thus be a constant flow of men supporting and carrying it forward through every obstruction.

Treated in this way, General Joffre believed that both of the two German defence lines could be broken through by the first assault. The divisions in reserve—the number was not stated—preceded by a strong force of cavalry, would then be rushed through and efforts concentrated on widening the gaps. Any continued resistance near the latter was to be dealt with by the infantry of the reserve, whilst special and distant objectives were given to the cavalry, which was to go forward at once in pursuit of the retreating enemy. “Nos chefs de cavalerie doivent être convaincus de l’absolue nécessité d’une poursuite acharnée sans attendre l’infanterie.”¹ With an optimism which General Nivelle was to emulate in April 1917, the cavalry on the Artois front was allotted a line Ath—Mons in Belgian territory, as its ulterior objective. This constituted an advance of fifty miles due east, which would effectively cut all the main communications leading southwards across the plain of Douai. Similarly the cavalry on the front of the Champagne attack was to cross the Aisne, and advance northwards in the direction Mézières—Hirson—Maubeuge, west of the Meuse, and thence across the enemy’s communications between the Ardennes and the Dutch (Limburg) frontier. General Joffre emphasized that rapidity of movement was the first essential to success,

¹ French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 280.

Sept. and, to support the cavalry, motor buses and lorries were to be ready to take forward detachments of infantry. These would be followed by other units, on foot but lightly equipped, to ensure the possession of all vital points.

If the resistance of the enemy on the fronts of attack selected could be shattered, General Joffre maintained that it was imperative to break the German power definitely by a general offensive of all the Allied forces on the entire Western front. The Germans were believed to have no organized scheme of defence behind their new second system: ¹ open fighting with the German reserves might therefore be expected to occur at an early stage. In this phase of the operations General Joffre confidently hoped that the numerical superiority of the Allies would be decisive. The French Armies not actually engaged in the original attack had accordingly been ordered to be ready to pass rapidly to the offensive, leaving Territorial troops to guard the original front line. Sir John French agreed that the Second and Third Armies of the British Expeditionary Force should be prepared to act in a similar manner, and that all dispositions should be made to allow these Armies to move with the least possible delay, the Third Army towards Le Cateau and the Second Army towards Audenarde.

The Belgians also undertook to make preparations for a general advance.

SIR JOHN FRENCH'S ORDERS

Sir John French's orders for the participation of the British Expeditionary Force in the offensive, in accordance with General Joffre's plan, were issued on the 18th September, in the form of "General Instructions for the
 Maps 6, 7, 8. Sketch 17. "Commanders of Armies and G.H.Q. Reserve".² The offensive to be undertaken by the B.E.F. was to be an integral part of the offensive of the French Tenth Army in Artois.

The main assault between Lens and the La Bassée canal was to be carried out by the First Army,³ and General Haig, its commander, was to conduct the battle. The six divisions of its IV. and I. Corps were to deliver the assault,

¹ But see Chapter VIII.

² Appendix 15.

³ See Appendix 3 for Order of Battle.

whilst its other two corps, the Indian and III., north of the 18 Sept. canal, made subsidiary attacks.

The Second Army (II., Canadian, V. and VI. Corps), between Armentières and Ypres, was also to undertake subsidiary operations, with the purpose of deceiving the enemy as to the real direction of the main attack. For this object, two of its ten divisions, the 8rd and 14th, under Lieut.-General Allenby, were to carry out an attack on the enemy's trenches north and south of Bellewaarde Lake, just north of Hooze, whilst a demonstration was made against Messines.¹ General Plumer was also to be prepared either to launch a general offensive at once should the enemy retire from his front, or to detach troops to follow up a success elsewhere.

The Third Army (XII., X. and VII. Corps) on the Somme uplands south of the French Tenth Army, was to support the French attack with its artillery, and General Monro was to be ready to send forward its nine divisions² at once to co-operate with the French troops in the event of the enemy retiring.

Owing to the great extent of line on which the British troops would be operating, Sir John French had decided to retain a strong force as a general reserve in his own hands ready to meet any emergency. It was to consist of the Cavalry Corps, the XI. Corps, and the Indian Cavalry Corps. It was apparent that a force of this nature should consist of seasoned troops, as, in the event of a successful assault by the First Army, the general reserve might have to participate in open warfare. The cavalry fully responded to this standard; but with the divisions of the XI. Corps it was not entirely the case. Four experienced divisions had already been taken from the First and Second Armies in August to assist in forming the Third Army, in order to take over the French front north of the Somme, and it was considered that not another seasoned division could be withdrawn without endangering the British front. There was no choice, therefore, but to use two of the New Army divisions, the 21st and 24th, the last—except for

¹ The subsidiary attacks were begun, as will be seen in Chapter XIV. where they are described, half an hour to two hours before the main First Army attack.

² XII. Corps : 22nd and 27th Divisions ;

X. Corps : 5th, 18th and 51st Divisions ;

VII. Corps : 4th, 48th and 37th Divisions.

The 26th Division, which left England on the 19th September, was in reserve, but available to take part in the advance.

18 Sept. the 26th which landed on the 19th September and the 25th (allotted to the Second Army) which landed on the 25th and 26th—to arrive from the United Kingdom before the battle. Sir John French was not however dissatisfied at having to employ young troops, expressing the opinion that they would do better for his purpose than divisions which, having been some time in France, had acquired the sedentary habits of trench warfare. They were to be supported by the newly constituted Guards Division (Major-General the Earl of Cavan),¹ for the most part war-experienced troops, which had been assembled at Lumbres near St. Omer during August. These three divisions had been formed into the XI. Corps, under Lieut.-General R. C. B. Haking on the 30th August 1915,² with, of course, a new staff, composed of officers who had never previously worked together or served on a corps staff.³ In separate orders issued with the G.H.Q. instructions of the 18th September, the bulk of the general reserve was ordered to take position behind the front of the First Army for the impending operations: the XI. Corps in an area north and south of Lillers (7 miles west by north of Béthune), and the Cavalry Corps (1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions) (under Lieut.-General H. D. Fanshawe) near Théroutanne (10 miles north-west of Lillers). The 3rd Cavalry Division was allotted to the First Army as Army cavalry. The Indian Cavalry Corps (Lieut.-General M. F. Rimington) was to concentrate around Doullens behind the Third Army.

¹ The 4th (Guards) Brigade became the 1st Guards Brigade, its place in the 2nd Division being taken by the supernumerary 19th Brigade. The 2nd and 3rd Guards Brigades were formed from the four Guards battalions, two each, of the 1st (Guards) and 20th Infantry Brigades, with the addition of the 3/Grenadier Guards and 2/Irish Guards, and 4/Grenadier Guards and 1/Welsh Guards, respectively. The last three named were newly raised, as was the 4/Coldstream Guards, which became the divisional Pioneer battalion. Of the artillery, three brigades came from the 16th Division (which was still completing its training and did not leave Ireland until the 8th September, crossing to France on the 17th December), and the fourth (howitzers) from the 11th Division (which had taken only 18-pdrs. to the Dardanelles). The 55th Field Company R.E. accompanied the two Guards battalions of the 20th Brigade; the 75th and 76th, and the Signal Company came from the 16th Division. At Field-Marshal Earl Kitchener's suggestion, a pioneer battalion formed part of each of the new divisions. Recruited with suitable men, the battalions were intended to carry out field engineering work requiring more skill and handiness than could be expected of the infantry but less technical skill than the Royal Engineers provided, and also to act as infantry when required. By June 1916 all divisions possessed a pioneer battalion.

² He was succeeded in the 1st Division by Major-General A. E. A. Holland (died as Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Holland, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P., in 1927).

³ See Note I. Chapter XV.

The 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions were directed to 18 Sept. prepare for alternative rôles, according as the breakthrough occurred first opposite the French attack or the British, that is, north or south of Lens. In order to lose no time in the pursuit, it was intended to push both the French and British cavalry corps through the gap in either front as soon as it occurred. The most probable places for action were considered to be across the north end of the Vimy plateau near Souchez, on the French front south of Lens, or between Loos and Hulluch, on the British front north of Lens. Passages and bridges, marked with signboards, were prepared across the rear lines of trenches leading up to these areas. It was agreed between General Foch and Sir John French that in the case of the breakthrough occurring first north of Lens, the British 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions should advance at once through the gap and seize the crossings at the Haute Deule canal between Douai (12 miles E.S.E. of Lens) and Courrières (5 miles N.N.E. of Lens). They would then advance north of Douai to the Schelde, occupying the crossings between Condé and Tournai, as soon as possible, and cutting the railways Valenciennes—Ath and Ath—Lille. The French cavalry corps (under General Conneau) would move through the gap behind the British cavalry divisions and then advance south of them, through Somain (10 miles east of Douai) and Douai, with the line Le Quesnoy—Condé as its final objective. The Indian Cavalry Corps (Lieut.-General M. F. Rimington) was to be ready to support the British or French cavalry as might be decided.

In the case of the breakthrough being south of Lens, the objectives for the British and French cavalry remained the same, but in this case the French would take the lead, the British passing through the French infantry and then moving on their original objectives.

To support the British cavalry, a sufficient number of motor buses to transport a brigade of infantry were to be assembled at Lillers.

Bombing was to be the main feature of the air work, the objective being the enemy railway system feeding the battle area. A comprehensive scheme had been drawn up by the French and British General Staffs in collaboration for carrying out operations against the German communications and the main railway centres between the North Sea and Reims, particularly against the railways passing through the gap between the Artois plateau and the

18 Sept. Ardennes; for by these routes reinforcements, supplies and ammunition reached the German Armies fighting about Reims and Arras.

In the summer of 1915 the means at the disposal of the Royal Flying Corps were limited. It was realized that damage to the permanent way could easily be repaired; that important bridges and stations had air defence, and that in any case, the bombs available were not powerful enough to destroy them. It was therefore decided that the best means of blocking a line was to damage a train, if possible in a cutting. The division of work arranged was that the French were to operate against the railways leading from Belgium by Hirson and Mézières to the Champagne front, and also against the railway junctions of Cambrai, St. Quentin and Tergnier, on the front of the Arras attack. British aeroplanes were to carry out the work against the railways leading to the front of the First and Second Armies.

The line Douai—Valenciennes was to be bombed by the 3rd Wing R.F.C.; the line Valenciennes—Lille by the 2nd Wing, and No. 12 (H.Q.) Squadron which was subsequently switched over to the lines Lille—Don and Lille—Seclin—Douai. The line Courtrai—Deynze was to be attacked by aeroplanes of the Royal Naval Air Service (of the Dover Patrol) from Dunkirk. The bombing of the railway communications was to be continued daily throughout the period of the operations.

Long-distance reconnaissance, tactical reconnaissance, patrolling, co-operation with the artillery and bombing of the enemy trenches were also arranged.¹ A new-pattern ground-strip for communication with the air was prepared. It was in the form of an arrow, to be displayed by battalion headquarters when the advance was held up by any special centre of resistance: the arrow gave the direction, whilst bars were to be added, one for each two hundred yards that the obstacle was distant from the arrow.² For the first time, it may be said, there was a true organization of air co-operation. The most difficult pioneer work towards co-operation between the artillery and air-observers had been done, but it was still on an individualistic basis—observers liked to work with their favourite batteries, using their own

¹ For indicating to ground observers the position of the infantry, coloured screens, different for each division, were used.

² See Diagram 1 (Map volume) on which the R.F.C. programme is shown diagrammatically.

methods—and there was as yet no recognized standard 18 Sept. system of ranging, although the clock-code had been introduced. It may be added that up to this time, air-fighting, although it had taken place, had formed no great part of the Flying Corps work, and it was not until after the battle of Loos that it assumed a serious aspect.¹

¹ Of the 1st Wing R.F.C. (Lieut.-Colonel E. B. Ashmore) :—

Nos. 2 and 3 Squadrons had each 2 flights detailed for counter-battery work and one for observing trench bombardment.

No. 10 Squadron had one flight for long distance reconnaissance and 2 for artillery observation.

No. 16 Squadron had one flight for tactical reconnaissance, and 2 for artillery observation.

All artillery observation machines had wireless sets, and it was found possible to keep 3 machines per squadron in the air without serious jamming.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE OF LOOS

(Maps 1, 7 ; Diagram 1 ; Sketches A, 17, 19)

THE GROUND

Map 1. FROM the northern edge of the Artois plateau the ground at first falls steeply, dropping about 120 feet in 300 yards ; but, this lower level reached, the slope changes, and broad rounded spurs with gentle gradients run forward north-eastwards for eight to ten miles, merging gradually into the plain of Flanders. The two easternmost of the spurs, which cross the battlefield, are devoid of hedges and fences, and featureless except for slight undulations ; they are of no great height, all being within the 75 to 80 metre contour lines, that is the difference of elevation is under 130 feet. The area was bounded by groups and rows of the cheaply built cottages of a French mining district, from which emerged the occasional lattice-girder tower of a minehead, or the top of a dump of mine refuse. A more unpromising scene for a great offensive battle can hardly be imagined ; and on the 25th September 1915 the surface was a barren prairie of rank grass, intersected by trenches whose white chalk parapets defied concealment.

On the eastern or right of the two battlefield spurs, called the Cité spur or ridge, lie the mining villages of Cité St. Auguste, Cité St. Emile, Cité St. Edouard and Cité St. Laurent—the northern suburbs of Lens. On the western, that reaches out towards the La Bassée canal, is the village of Grenay, and it was known as the Grenay spur, though in the course of the battle a part of it was called Lone Tree ridge. Between the two spurs is a considerable depression or valley, that widens out as it proceeds north-eastwards towards Bauvin at the junction of the La Bassée and the

Haute Deule canals. In it, two miles north-east of Grenay and thirty feet lower, is the village of Loos, after which the valley was named, and, another two miles further down and fifty feet lower again, the village of Hulluch.

The Allied front left the high ground of the plateau about Notre Dame de Lorette—a chapel and famous place of pilgrimage, but even more famous for the fighting in May 1915—and thence followed the well-defined ridge of the Grenay spur past Grenay, near which place was the meeting point of the French and British sectors of the front. Northwards from Grenay for about three miles, to the Vermelles—Hulluch road, the opposing trenches, from two hundred to four hundred yards apart, lay roughly on either side of the crest of the Grenay spur, and in many places were therefore concealed from one another, although the ground was bare. North of the Vermelles—Hulluch road, as far as Fosse 8 de Béthune, the ridge flattens out to a low crest that bent back behind the German front line, so that the Germans here had the advantage of command and overlooked the British position. This advantage they retained from Fosse 8 northwards to the La Bassée canal; the dump of Fosse 8, the upper stories of the houses of Auchy village and the slight eminence on which lay the part of their front called the “Hohenzollernwerk”, known to the British as the “Hohenzollern Redoubt”,¹ all giving good observation facilities.

An important feature and landmark was the Route Nationale from Lens to La Bassée, some two miles behind and roughly parallel to the German front. Coming from Arras, and passing through Lens, this highway ascends the Cité spur, and, continuing due northwards, crosses a prominent knoll on it, known as Hill 70, the barren slopes of which were to play an important part in the battle. The road descends the northern side of Hill 70 at a steady gradient, thence crossing the Loos valley and traversing the villages of Cité St. Elie and Haisnes in its straight northward course to La Bassée. The German second line of defence lay generally along the trace of this main thoroughfare, and the villages near it had been converted into small fortresses, arranged to cover and flank the open ground in the intervals between them.

Until recent years the district between Lens and the La Bassée canal had been only thinly populated. Its chalky soil was of little agricultural value, and the farms

¹ For a description of this work, see below.

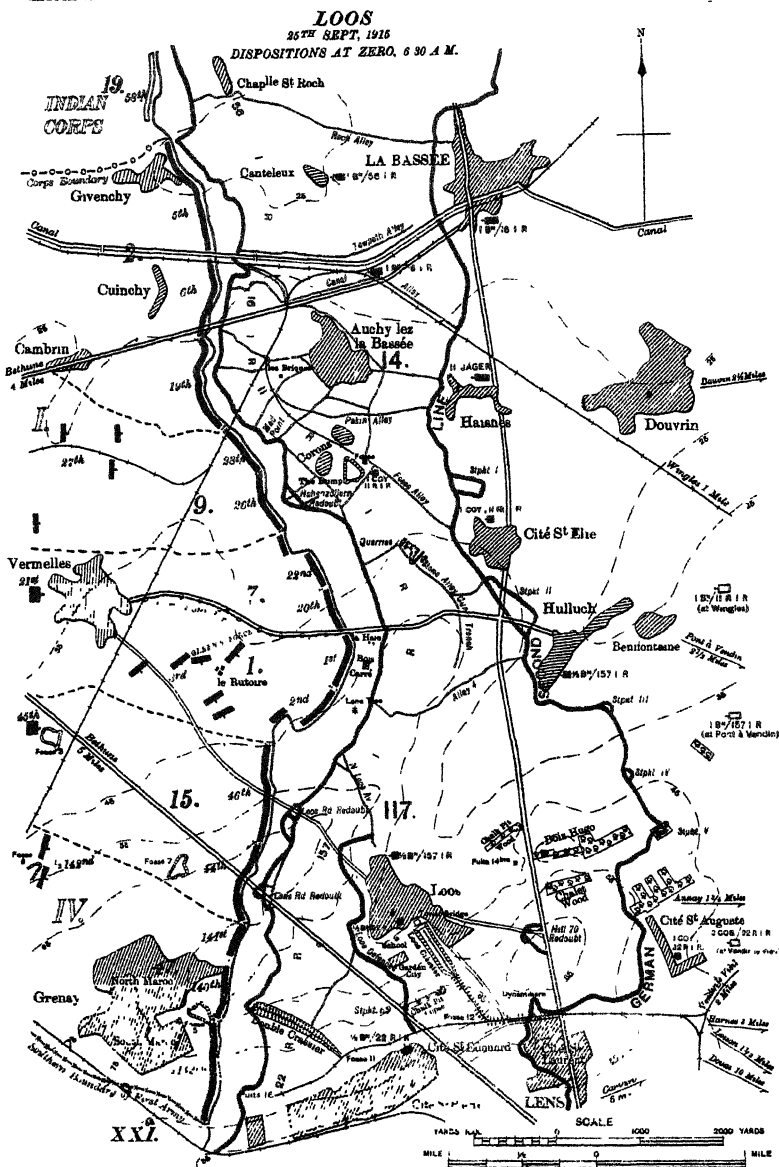
were clustered together in small villages around the few wells that then existed. About the year 1870, however, the opening up of the western extremity of the great coal seam of Western Europe brought to it a new industry and more prosperous conditions.¹

There were altogether six principal pit-heads, or "Fosses", besides auxiliary shafts, "Puits", in the battle area; two in the northern sector and four in the southern sector of the front. Each of them was of considerable tactical importance. At the pit-heads rose the tall rectangular iron lattice-girder standards of the wheel-houses of the cage lifts. They towered above their surroundings to a height of ninety or one hundred feet, and, in this comparatively flat district, were invaluable—until the enemy made them untenable—as observation posts. Close to each Fosse was a large dump, or "Crassier", on which the loose shale, slag and waste from the mines was piled. These, too, either conical or flat-topped, rose high above their surroundings, and, when tunnelled or hollowed out, afforded commanding and fairly shell-proof shelters, both for observation posts and for machine guns.²

As regards observation, the Germans held the advantage. In the northern sector both the wheel-house and the dump of Fosse 8, close to the German front line, gave complete command of the whole of the back area of the British lines. From it every movement could be observed on the roads leading back to Béthune, and every battery brought to within 3,500 yards of the German front trenches could be located. A similar command over the southern part of the battle zone was given by the combined wheel-house of a fosse and a puits in Loos village, the standards of which were known as the Loos Pylons, or "Tower Bridge", from their resemblance, at a distance, to that familiar London landmark. They stood up above the side of the Loos valley, and from the wheel-house could be seen any considerable movements of British troops for two or

¹ The ground had been leased to various companies, the principal concessions near the battle zone being those allotted to the Société des Mines de Béthune and the Société des Mines de Lens. With the exception of Fosse 8 de Béthune, the Béthune Company's mines all lay in the British zone, and those of the Lens Company in the German zone. By the terms of the concessions, the properties of the different companies were not connected underground. Precautions, therefore, had only to be taken by the British authorities to close and keep closed the galleries leading from Fosse 8 to the other shafts of the Béthune Company behind the British lines.

² Some of them, e.g. the end of the Loos Double Crassier, were so hot that digging in them presented difficulties.



Sufficient contours are given to indicate the ground heights in metres.

three miles back. The British heavy artillery strove in vain to destroy these watch towers prior to the battle.¹

The principal British observation station in the northern sector of the front was the dump of Fosse 9 de Béthune at Annequin on the La Bassée road, a great conical mound rising to a height of 135 feet, and the most prominent feature of the entire region. Unfortunately it was over two miles from the front trenches, but it was used by both British and French medium and heavy artillery as their main observation station. In the southern sector the flat-topped slag heap of Fosse 5 de Béthune, east of Grenay and immediately behind the British front, gave an extensive view of the German defences on both sides of the Loos valley. Although other Fosses were used, it was the chief British observation station for this part of the line, but its field of vision was limited by the Cité spur and its knoll, Hill 70.

Near to each pit-head were the usual collections of technical buildings, and in the immediate vicinity were the miners' cottages, or "Corons", built close together in parallel rows. These cottages were small, two-storeyed buildings of identical design, built, not very solidly, of red brick.² A direct hit from the high-explosive shell of an 18-pdr. field gun was sufficient to demolish one; but each possessed a cellar and, covered with the débris of the walls and upper floors, this was proof against all but the heavier types of artillery, and afforded protection to fifteen or twenty men.

The buildings of the Puits were less pretentious than those of the Fosses, and consisted generally of a wooden structure, containing the winding machinery, with the tall iron standards of a light cage-lift near to it.

In the six miles of front between Grenay and the La Bassée canal, the principal mining areas—and, in consequence of their buildings, the most easily defensible sectors—were, in the southern part, near Loos and Grenay, and, in the northern part, near the canal. Between these two areas lay a comparatively open stretch of undulating plain, four miles in breadth from about Loos in the south to Haisnes in the north, extending eastwards across the

¹ The Loos Pylons, after capture in the battle, had been seven months in British possession before the German artillery, heavier and stronger than our own, succeeded in destroying them.

² The cottages built since the war to replace them are of superior type, "avec sanitation" and, grouped in "garden cities", give little idea of the drabness of 1915.

La Bassée—Lens road for six miles as far as the Haute Deule canal. It was over this great open space that a break-through of the German lines was to be attempted. It presented conditions very different to those under which the previous British offensives had been made. Instead of the rich pastures and cultivation of the Flanders plain, divided every few hundred yards by hedges and dykes, and always water-logged a few feet below ground level, the surface here was either rank grass or poor arable land. Except where it was crossed by trenches, it offered no obstacle to free movement either of infantry, artillery or cavalry, but equally provided no cover from the enemy's observers; and being flanked by great bastions of defended localities, hardly justified General Joffre's view that it was "particularly favourable ground"¹ for the British attack.

THE FIRST ARMY PLAN

Map 7. In consequence of preliminary conversations with the French, it had been decided early in August to assemble as secretly as possible the six divisions of the I. Corps (Lieut.-General H. de la P. Gough) and IV. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir H. Rawlinson), destined for the forthcoming operations, astride and south of the La Bassée canal. During the following weeks this had been satisfactorily accomplished. The IV. Corps now held the front from the Grenay—Lens railway, south-east of Grenay—where its 47th Division (Major-General C. St. L. Barter) joined hands with the French Tenth Army—to the Vermelles—Hulluch road. The 47th, a London Territorial division, had been in France since March 1915, and had the experience of the Battle of Festubert behind it. On its left, from the Béthune—Lens road (inclusive) to the Vermelles—Loos track, was the newly arrived 15th (Scottish) Division (Major-General F. W. N. McCracken), consisting entirely of Scottish battalions.² Next on the left, between the track and the I. Corps, was the 1st Division (Major-General A. E. A. Holland), in name one of the original formations of the B.E.F.³

¹ See page 118.

² Formed 11th September 1914, it was trained at Marlborough, and embarked for the Western front on 7th July 1915. For Order of Battle see Appendix 8.

³ It had recently lost the 1/Coldstream Guards and 1/Scots Guards, owing to the formation of the Guards Division. They had been replaced by the 10/Gloucestershire and 8/Royal Berkshire, both of "K.3" (the Third New Army).

The I. Corps, on the left of the IV. Corps, held the line from the Hulluch—Vermelles road northwards across the canal to the right of the Indian Corps at Givenchy. The right wing was the 7th Division, which since its landing in Belgium at the end of September 1914 had seen much hard fighting, and was still under its original commander, Major-General Sir T. Capper.¹ In the centre and extending to enclose the salient of the German line called the Hohenzollern Redoubt, was the 9th (Scottish) Division (Major-General G. H. Thesiger), also entirely composed of Scottish battalions; ² it was now to be put to the test of battle for the first time. The left wing of the corps astride the canal, and in touch with the Indian Corps, was the 2nd Division (Major-General H. S. Horne), another of the original divisions of the B.E.F.

To oppose the opening assault of the 75,000 men of these six British divisions there were immediately available only four German infantry regiments and one *Jäger* battalion, thirteen battalions in all: that is 10,000 to 11,000 men, with about a quarter of the field guns and howitzers, and less than half the number of heavy guns to support them that there were on the British front of attack, but with ample ammunition, which in some measure compensated for lack of numbers.³

During the months preceding the offensive, General Haig's plan, under instructions from G.H.Q., had, as we have already seen, experienced many changes. As the plan stood on the 7th August, the British support of the offensive of the French Tenth Army from Vimy ridge, south of Lens, was to be given principally by an artillery bombardment of the German defences on the whole front of the First Army. The strength of the British infantry attack was to depend on the success of the French, since it was considered that until the latter had driven the Germans from Vimy ridge, and could silence the German heavy batteries in and about Lens, a British offensive

¹ This division had given one of its original field companies R.E., the 55th, the 1/Grenadier Guards and 2/Scots Guards to the Guards Division, their places being taken by the 95th Field Company, a new unit, and by the 8/ and 9/Devonshire, Army Troops of "K.1" and "K.2," respectively.

² Formed 21st August 1914, it was trained at Aldershot, and embarked for the Western Front on 9th May 1915. For Order of Battle see Appendix 8.

³ For details of the organization of the German infantry and artillery, see Note III. Chapter IX.

The average strength of a German battalion at this time was estimated by British G.H.Q. Intelligence at 750 to 800 men.

north of Lens could make little progress. In preparation for this, however, a detailed scheme had been drawn up by the First Army for attacks by the I. and IV. Corps south of the La Bassée canal. The extent of front that could be dealt with depended on the amount of artillery available, and, although as much super-heavy and heavy artillery as could be spared from the remainder of the British front had been lent to the First Army for the operations, General Haig considered that the frontage of two divisions was the most that could be adequately prepared for a simultaneous assault. He therefore decided to develop the attack progressively, beginning with an assault by the 15th and 9th Divisions, the one against Loos village, including Hill 70, and the other against the Hohenzollern Redoubt, including Fosse 8 behind it.

British experience at Neuve Chapelle and Festubert, as well as French elsewhere, had shown that troops attacking on a narrow front suffered greatly from concentrated artillery fire. In order, therefore, to give the first assault of the 15th and 9th Divisions more chance of success, it was suggested that their flanks and front should be covered by smoke, if the wind were favourable, so as to conceal the exact frontage of attack and force the enemy to disperse his artillery fire to some extent. Whilst the plan of a two-division attack was in the actual course of development, a new and important weapon became available. This weapon was poison gas, and it offered enormous possibilities. In particular, it seemed that it would be as effective and more quickly so than high-explosive shells in neutralizing the enemy's defence;¹ would compensate for the lack of heavy artillery; and would permit the attack of the First Army being made on a much wider front than that of two divisions. An attack on that frontage, even if concealed by smoke, invited destruction by German artillery. With smoke and gas combined, and extended to a six-division frontage, there was less likelihood of suffering severely from gun fire in the first stages of the attack and there was every hope that some part or parts of the attacking troops would succeed in breaking through the main defence line, when the capture of the enemy artillery would soon follow.

¹ As proved to be the case in the later stages of the war, when plenty of gas shell was available and used extensively by both belligerents.

THE DECISION TO USE POISON GAS

The decision to employ gas as an accessory for offensive operations dated back to the 3rd May 1915, when, as a result of the first German gas attack at Ypres ten days previously, Lord Kitchener had given instructions for the preparation of retaliatory measures.¹ Thenceforward the whole aspect of chemical warfare received the careful attention of G.H.Q. In addition to the research and experimental work carried on at home—Porton, near Salisbury, becoming the chief centre—a laboratory was established at Helfaut, near St. Omer, and "Special Companies" of the Royal Engineers were formed, under the command of Major Foulkes, for carrying out offensive gas

¹ He entrusted Colonel Louis Jackson, R.E., then employed in the Directorate of Fortifications and Works, the Royal Engineers Branch in the War Office—who was already engaged in investigating smoke producers—with the task of exploring the possibilities. Closely associated with his office in the early work were Professors H. B. Baker and J. F. Thorpe, of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, and Sir George Beilby. The first trials took place on 13th May, under the supervision of Mr. A. T. Smith (of the Kestner-Kellner Alkali Company), who on 28th April had written to the War Office to point out that his firm was the only one in the country that could supply chlorine. The original output capacity of the company was two to three tons a day; this was increased in a month to ten tons. On 23rd June Colonel Jackson's Section was transferred to the Ministry of Munitions, and on the same date the Scientific and Commercial Advisory Committees were appointed to assist him in the development of chemical warfare.

The Germans were believed to have employed a mixture of chlorine and bromine, but as there was little or no plant available for the production of bromine outside the German Empire, the first efforts of Colonel Jackson's department were confined to the provision of liquid chlorine.

The final large scale trial took place at Runcorn on the 4th June, and from the behaviour of the gas on this occasion—it emerged from the valves of single large factory containers—the method of carrying out the first British gas attack was conceived by Major C. H. Foulkes, R.E., who had been sent over from G.H.Q. He also decided on the organization of the personnel required for the operation.

Nothing was known at the time of the system employed by the Germans and there was no time for further experiments. It was estimated that in moderate winds a continuous gas cloud would be formed at a distance of two hundred yards from "points" of emission established in a line twenty-five yards apart, the duration of the attack depending, of course, on the number of cylinders available at each "point" and on the rate of discharge of the gas.

The cylinders at each "point" were to be handled by two men, a specially enlisted chemist and an infantryman, so that technical skill and expert manipulation combined with trench experience would be found in each pair.

The size and weight of the cylinders were decided at this time, and the first consignment of gas cylinders was despatched to France on the 10th July.

August. operations.¹ On the 22nd August a demonstration of the "chlorine wave", as it was called, was given at Helfaut, in the presence of General Haig and his corps and divisional commanders, who were greatly impressed. The chlorine gas was contained in steel cylinders² manufactured for the purpose, and these were placed in a recess below the firing step of the front parapet of the fire trench. A flexible copper pipe (replaced later by rubber tubing) connected the cylinder with an ordinary half-inch iron pipe, eight to ten feet long, provided with a jet at the end, through which the gas was emitted. The iron pipe was laid on the top of the parapet towards the enemy's trenches, and weighted with sandbags.

The cylinders worked on the principle of a soda-water syphon, and on opening the cock the gas rushed out in the form of a yellowish white vapour, which developed into a greenish yellow cloud a few feet from the pipe. It was hoped that as the density of the gas was greater than that of air, it would sink into any underground shelters, such as the deep dug-outs of the German trenches and the cellars in the villages, to which artillery fire could not penetrate, and compel the Germans to come out into the open, at the same time incapacitating them for stubborn resistance. If the infantry assault followed immediately after the gas discharge, it would thus be given every chance of success.

Although only a few cylinders were used to show how gas was emitted, the demonstration gave to those who witnessed it a very definite impression of the value of chlorine gas in offensive operations. On the following day, the 23rd August, General Haig received Sir John French's fresh orders, based on Lord Kitchener's instruc-

¹ The depot for the Special Companies was organized and Nos. 186 and 187 Special Companies R.E. were formed at Helfaut in July 1915 from men transferred from the infantry in France (6 from each battalion) and drafts of specially enlisted men with suitable qualifications originally engaged in England, with the rank of Chemist Corporal. In August two more companies, Nos. 188 and 189, were authorized. On 4th September two companies totalling 34 sections (average strength 28 men), under Captains V. P. Smith and F. R. Sanders, were sent to the First Army for the forthcoming operations, and were joined by further sections of the other companies later in the month.

² At the Boulogne Conference on the 20th June 1915 (see page 115) a sub-committee had discussed the offensive and defensive value of various chemical agents. It was ruled that, owing to the danger of shell fire, it was preferable to discharge the gas from cylinders in the front trenches rather than pump it through pipes from a central storage plant behind the lines. The number of cylinders required for a cloud gas attack was confirmed.

tions to co-operate with all possible strength and vigour Sept. in the operations planned by General Joffre:—"The Commander-in-Chief wishes you to support the French attack to the full extent of your available resources and not to limit your action in the manner indicated in his letter of the 7th August." This, together with the results of the gas demonstration on the previous day, and the information that gas in considerable quantities would be available, led to the idea of employing the gas on the whole front of attack south of the La Bassée canal, and making a simultaneous assault with all six divisions, instead of attacking progressively, with at first two divisions only, as in General Haig's original plan. The gas masks taken from German prisoners were found to be respirators of the Ypres type, and for the most part in poor condition. Machine gunners and a few others were provided with oxygen apparatus, but these were only effective for thirty minutes, so that, if the discharge could be prolonged for forty minutes, General Haig hoped that, the wind being favourable, all six divisions of the I. and IV. Corps would be able to advance through the German defences without any serious opposition.

At a conference held at Hinges, First Army headquarters on the 6th September, after the date of the battle had been postponed from the 15th to the 25th,¹ General Haig explained his changed intentions to his corps and divisional commanders. Previously, he said, he had doubted whether an offensive south of the La Bassée canal had any chance of success, owing to the inadequate strength of the heavy artillery²; but the possibilities that he now saw in the use of gas, if available on an extensive scale, and if the wind were favourable, had altered his views. Under these conditions the gas would more than compensate for insufficient artillery support, and allow him to attack on a wider front than his guns alone warranted. There was a prospect that the German defences could be completely overrun, and that the first tactical successes might be turned into a strategical victory:—"Provided", as he told his commanders, "that we and the French take reasonable precautions as to secrecy, and advance with the necessary vigour and strength on the general line Douai—Valenciennes, decisive results are likely to be obtained. The gas is to be lavishly employed on the

¹ See page 130.

² See pages 185-6.

Sept. "whole front of attack. It will be carried by the wind "in front of the assaulting divisions, and create a panic "in the German ranks, or, at least, incapacitate them for "a prolonged resistance." Although the bombardment might be insufficient to demolish the German wire entanglements and strong points on all parts of the front to be attacked, the advance in other parts would, he hoped, keep the enemy on the run and break down any local opposition. He emphasized that the conditions under which this offensive was to be made were different to those attending any previous attack. Instead of a series of deliberate advances from position to position, every effort was to be made to press forward and gain as much ground as possible in the first rush. In favourable circumstances, he expected the advance to be rapid, like that of the Germans at Ypres on the 22nd April; and, since the gas should be effective up to a distance of two miles, he hoped that the German first and second defence systems would be broken through in the first rush of the assaulting divisions, before the bulk of the German reserves, from Lille and Valenciennes, could arrive on the scene. For this reason he asked for "violent and continuous action" to be maintained throughout the assault. His hope that the gas would prove effective was not a little confirmed by the fact that on the 15th September, the day originally fixed for the battle by General Foch, the wind was very favourable for a gas discharge. The reports of the divisions of the First Army, which, from the 18th onwards, forwarded to him statistics of the steadiness and velocity of the wind at 4.30 A.M., 5 A.M. and 5 P.M., all seemed to point to the likelihood of a suitable wind.

Map 7. The final operation orders of the First Army for the offensive were issued on the 19th September.¹ The gas cylinders were to be turned on at a time, zero hour, to be notified on the evening preceding the battle. After a discharge of gas and smoke lasting forty minutes, accompanied by an intense bombardment of the German front defences, a general offensive was to be delivered south of and astride the La Bassée canal by all six divisions of the I. and IV. Corps.

The immediate intention was to break through the German first and second defence systems on the frontage of four miles between Loos and Haisnes, that is in the wide

¹ Appendix 16.

open space already mentioned between the two thickly Sept. populated mining zones.¹

To protect the flanks of the subsequent advance beyond the German second defence system, the outer divisions of the two corps were given limited objectives, the occupation of which would form defensive flanks facing south-east and north-east. Thus on the southern flank the 47th Division (IV. Corps) was to pivot on the Double Crassier, in front of Grenay, and reach a line facing south-east, including the Loos Crassier. In the same way, on the northern flank, two brigades of the 2nd Division (I. Corps) were to reach and hold the line of the Haisnes—Cuinchy railway between Haisnes and the canal, whilst its third brigade—the 5th—north of the canal, was to capture the villages of Canteleux and Chapelle St. Roch, and join up the new front with the line of the Indian Corps north of the latter place.

The remaining four divisions formed the mass of attack. In explanation of the brief orders their commanders were told to “push on eastwards in the direction of Pont à Vendin and the Haute Deule canal to the extreme limit of their power. Adequate reserves are behind us, and “all attacks will be pressed forward with energy until the “enemy’s resistance is crushed.” In this way, the town of Lens and the neighbouring mining district would be turned from the north, whilst the French Tenth Army enveloped them from the south.

Information obtained by Intelligence agents had brought to notice definite indications of defences behind the German second line; but, as this was not confirmed by air reconnaissances, it was assumed, incorrectly, that they did not exist. As soon, therefore, as the second line had been crossed by the assaulting infantry, the 3rd Cavalry Division, followed by the 1st and 2nd from the general reserve, was to move through the front of the First Army, secure the crossings of the Haute Deule canal, and thence advance in co-operation with the French cavalry, on the right, as already described.²

North of the canal the enemy was to be vigorously **Sketch** engaged in order to prevent him from withdrawing troops. ^{17.} For this purpose, subsidiary attacks were to be delivered by the Indian Corps, near Moulin du Pietre, opposite Aubers,

¹ This gave the attacking divisions a mile of front each. At the Battle of the Somme in the following year they had from a mile to a mile and a quarter.

² See page 141.

Sept. and by the III. Corps near Le Bridoux, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Armentières. These corps were also to be fully prepared for a general advance immediately the situation permitted.

One brigade, the 7th, of the 3rd Cavalry Division (Major-General C. J. Briggs), was split up into detachments, and allotted to divisions, in addition to their Yeomanry squadrons,¹ on the assumption that, once the German second line had been broken, open warfare would ensue, in which case divisional cavalry would be essential for local reconnaissance and protection. The remainder of the division, the 6th and 8th Cavalry Brigades, was to be ready to advance as soon as a break in the German defences permitted.

Diagram 1. The programme of the 1st Wing of the Royal Flying Corps, which formed part of the First Army, has already been described. Of its four squadrons, one was allotted for work on the front of each of its four corps.²

General Joffre had left it to General Foch and Sir John French to decide the hour at which the Artois offensive should be launched. The French having no gas to use, were thus free from considerations of weather, but General Foch could not fix a definite hour for their assault: he wished to carry out the final phase of the bombardment at a time when the light would be favourable for observation, and therefore considered that the infantry could not leave the trenches before 10 A.M. at the earliest. He hoped that, if the British did not use gas, they would deliver their assault at the same time. Sir John French, however, wished in any case to attack as early as possible in the morning, so as to give time for the assaulting troops to entrench before nightfall the positions gained. The actual hour of assault was thus left indefinite, and, for reasons to

¹ The 15th and 19th Hussars, which had provided the divisional squadrons for the first six divisions, had been withdrawn in April 1915 to form the 9th Cavalry Brigade. These regiments were relieved by Yeomanry.

² See Diagram 1 in the Map volume.

A squadron had three flights, each of four aeroplanes. The squadrons on the front of the main assault, that is Nos. 2 and 3, were to be used entirely for artillery work; each of them was to employ two flights for assisting the counter-battery work, and one flight for observing the bombardment of the trenches and strong points. No. 10 Squadron, with the Indian Corps, was to employ two of its flights for artillery work, and the third was to be at the disposal of First Army headquarters for distant reconnaissances. No. 16 Squadron, with the III. Corps, was also to use two of its flights for artillery work; its third flight being employed for close reconnaissances on the whole front of the First Army.

The 8th Kite Balloon Section (one balloon), near Béthune, was to co-operate with the artillery of the I. and IV. Corps, and the 6th, near Lestrem, with the Indian and III. Corps.

be explained later, the French infantry attack eventually Sept. began five and a half hours after the British.

THE ALTERNATIVE PLAN AND FINAL PREPARATIONS

General Haig was firmly convinced that, without an increased establishment of heavy guns and without a larger supply of ammunition for those which he actually had, an attack against any part of the German defences would entail very heavy losses with little hope of success, should the gas attack prove impracticable. If the wind was unfavourable for the employment of gas on the day fixed for the attack, that is, if it was not blowing from a direction between north-west and south-west, he was of opinion that the infantry assault should be postponed until conditions were more favourable. On the 16th September he wrote to Sir W. Robertson, "Without gas the front of our attacks must be reduced to what our guns can satisfactorily prepare, with the results normally attendant on small fronts; namely, concentration of hostile guns on point of attack, large losses and small progress. In my opinion, under no circumstances, should our forthcoming attack be launched without the aid of gas." His views were, however, overruled by G.H.Q., and, owing to the necessity of co-operating with the French Tenth Army, instructions were given that the attack of the First Army was "not to be dependent on the use of gas, which, in the nature of things, must be uncertain"; and that the assault should take place on the 25th September, irrespective of weather conditions.

General Haig, therefore, submitted the following scheme for the consideration of the Commander-in-Chief:—

(a) If the weather conditions were favourable on the 25th, the attack with gas on the whole front would take place;

(b) if the wind did not permit the use of gas, but the weather was otherwise favourable, and an attack must take place that day, then the IV. and I. Corps should attack, each with one division only, south of the canal, and the III. and Indian Corps should demonstrate north of the canal, with the object of engaging the enemy and holding him along the whole front of the First Army. The wider attack of the IV. and I. Corps, with gas, would be postponed and take place on the 26th, if the wind were then favourable for the use of gas;

Sept. (c) if the weather conditions were unfavourable on the 26th, then the wider attack would take place on the 27th, or not at all.

The scheme thus allowed a margin of three days in order to secure a favourable wind. Sir John French formally approved of it, giving General Haig authority to make minor modifications; but warned him that the date of the attack was not to be changed without permission from G.H.Q.

Sketch A. Two sets of orders, one for the general gas attack and the other for the limited attack, were therefore issued. Should only a reduced attack be possible, the 9th Division (I. Corps) was to assault the Hohenzollern Redoubt at day-break on the 25th, and if successful connect up the flanks of the Redoubt with the British front line, preparatory to an advance against Fosse 8 later in the morning. The attack of the 15th Division (IV. Corps) further south was to take place about 10 A.M., simultaneously with the French offensive south of Lens; and it was hoped that the earlier assault of the 9th Division would divert the enemy's attention from it. The first objective of the 15th Division was to be the German front defences between the Lens—Béthune road and the Loos—Vermelles track, and success there was to be followed by the capture of the Loos salient, that is, the local defences immediately in front of Loos village. The remaining divisions of the IV. and I. Corps were to be prepared to extend the operations south and astride of the canal with all their resources, perhaps later in the day, perhaps at night under cover of darkness, or on the following morning with gas, if the wind were favourable. Which of these alternatives would be ordered would depend on the extent and rapidity of the progress made by the French south of Lens.

The preparations of the First Army had from the first been made on the assumption that the assault would take place on a day favourable for the use of gas. General Haig had asked for all the cylinders which could be supplied to be sent out at once, and they began to arrive from England in the first week in September. By the 19th September nearly 5,500 cylinders, containing a total of 150 tons of chlorine gas had been despatched to France, and were distributed among the different corps.¹

¹ The I. Corps was given 2,568 cylinders for its 259 bays (199 south of the La Bassée canal and 60 north of it). They were brought by rail to Gorre siding, east of Béthune, and thence taken by motor lorry (30

The immensity of the work of bringing the gas from **Sept.** railheads to the trenches may be gathered from the fact that some 8,000 men were required for it, and not without justice they considered it the most difficult and arduous task they ever had to perform. Working parties, three men to each cylinder,¹ carried the gas from the lorries to the front trenches, an average distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, under cover of darkness, and mostly along communication trenches, complete circuits with "Up" and "Down" routes being organized. On reaching the front line the cylinders were received by the personnel of the Special Companies, placed in the special recesses already dug under the front parapet of the fire bays of the trenches, and packed round with sandbags to protect them from shell fire. Not a cylinder was hit during the process of bringing up and installing them.

For the purpose of the gas attack, only such bays were to be used as allowed of the gas being emitted under favourable conditions. The number of cylinders in each bay depended on the length of the bay. Since a cylinder emptied in two minutes, for a forty minutes' consecutive discharge there should have been twenty cylinders to each twenty-five yards of fire trench.² But the total number of cylinders sent from England up to the time of the battle only allowed of twelve cylinders to each such length; it was therefore decided to turn on the gas intermittently instead of providing a continuous flow, and to use smoke candles in the intervals to simulate gas. These candles, made chiefly of phosphorus, were issued, either single or triple, in canvas-covered cardboard cases. The single candles were to be used alternately with the gas, and the triple candles lighted during the last few minutes to form, for the first time in the war, a thick smoke curtain, behind which the assaulting troops would advance. For this

cylinders to a lorry) to Cambrin church for the northern sector of the corps and to Clarke's Keep, near Vermelles, for the southern sector. The IV. Corps was allotted 2,460 cylinders for its 205 bays. They were unloaded from the trains at a siding near Saily Labourse, and taken by motor lorry to Vermelles church (Le Rutoire Farm road) and Noyelles. A small number of cylinders was also allotted to the Indian Corps.

¹ Four where long "carries" were necessary. Each filled cylinder weighed from 120 to 160 lbs. Special slings and wooden poles were provided for carrying.

² The long flow of gas was necessary to overcome the protection afforded by the German respirators. The short surprise discharges used by the enemy at Second Ypres were of course effective only against unprotected troops.

Sept. purpose, the First Army was provided with 6,370 single and 1,500 triple candles.¹

The care and turning on of the cylinders during the attack was entrusted to the specially raised companies of the Royal Engineers, and a party of six officers and 180 men—all trained in estimating the direction and velocity of the wind—were detailed from them to each of the six assaulting divisions.

At the demonstration of cloud gas at Helfaut on the 22nd August various devices for forming a smoke screen had also been shown, amongst them a Stokes mortar; and it was decided to employ some of these weapons² on those parts of the front of attack where cover was needed to propel special smoke shells, which, on bursting, would form a screen: for instance, on the flanks of the main assault, and against exceptionally strong positions, such as the Hohenzollern Redoubt. After the demonstration G.H.Q. had therefore telegraphed to the Ministry of Munitions for as many Stokes mortars and smoke shells as could be manufactured in time for the offensive.³ As a result,

¹ The programme for the discharge of gas and smoke on the front of the main assault, a printed copy of which was issued to each gas emplacement, was as follows:—

(Minutes)

- 0 (Zero Hour) Start the gas and run 6 cylinders one after the other at full blast until all are exhausted.
- 0.12 to 0.20 . Start the smoke. The smoke is to run concurrently with the gas if the gas is not exhausted at 0.12.
- 0.20 . . . Start the gas again and run 6 cylinders one after the other at full blast until all are exhausted.
- 0.32 to 0.40 . Start the smoke again. The smoke is to run concurrently with the gas, if the gas is not exhausted by 0.32.
- 0.38 . . . Turn all gas off punctually. Thicken up smoke with triple candles.
- Prepare for assault.
- 0.40 . . . ASSAULT.

Watches were issued, one to each bay, and carefully synchronized shortly before the commencement of the attack.

² The Stokes mortar, invented by Mr. Wilfred Stokes in January 1915, consisted of a 3-inch solid drawn steel tube. The means of propulsion was a cartridge (originally an ordinary sporting cartridge) attached to the base of the shell itself, and fired by a striker fixed in the base of the barrel.

The mortar when first tried was rejected as dangerous for H.E. ammunition, but Lieut.-General M. F. Rimington, commanding the Indian Cavalry Corps, was convinced of its possibilities, and brought it to the notice of Major Foulkes on the 25th June. The 3-inch container was considered too small for a gas bomb, so the Trench Warfare Branch of the Ministry of Munitions was asked to supply a 4-inch mortar and design a gas bomb for it. Eventually the difficulties of using H.E. were overcome, and the 3-inch Stokes mortar was manufactured in thousands. Two hundred 4-inch mortars were also produced, later on, for gas projection, and were in constant use until the termination of hostilities.

³ At the same time, Colonel A. E. Wardrop, Royal Artillery, was sent

twenty-seven 4-inch Stokes mortars and 10,000 smoke Sept. shells were available for the operations. Other means of creating smoke, such as phosphorus grenades and Threlfallite hand-grenades,¹ were also issued.

The process of bringing all this accessory material, both for the gas and the smoke, up to the front line trenches was carried on during the three nights immediately preceding the beginning of the preliminary bombardment.

The general engineer preparations were also very extensive. In addition to the divisional field companies, each corps had now two Army Troops Companies R.E.,² whilst besides the Pioneer battalions of the new divisions, large infantry working parties were employed. Where, as for instance on the 1st Division front, the width of No Man's Land was considered too wide for an assault, "T" heads were dug forward from the parapet and eventually linked up to form a new front line from which the assault was to take place. The communication trenches were deepened and widened, and "Up" and "Down" trenches provided in every sector; supplies of water stored, and dumps of tools and material, for consolidating ground gained, established near the front;³ command dug-outs, aid posts and observation posts built; trenches behind the front line bridged for the infantry advance; three cavalry routes across the trenches prepared; pegs driven into the

to London to explain the purpose for which they were required. There was no fixed pattern of mortar suitable, but it was decided to use the 4-inch pattern, of which twenty had been ordered on the 14th July 1915 for gas projection. These had been only just begun, and there were difficulties in the design of a gas shell; nevertheless, owing to the exceptional exertions of the factories concerned, a number of 4-inch Stokes mortars were quickly completed. The smoke shell itself was extemporized, and consisted of a cylindrical tin container filled with red phosphorus. The parts and material for 10,000 of these shells (including 15 tons of red phosphorus) were shipped to France early in September, and assembled at the First Army workshops at St. Venant.

¹ Invented by Sir Richard Threlfall in July 1915 for destroying the long grass in front of the trenches, which gave cover to enemy raiding parties. They consisted of cylindrical tins, filled with white phosphorus, paraffin, oil and petrol, which had both incendiary and smoke-producing effects.

² These came into existence in July 1915, and consisted of Fortress Companies renamed, Special Reserve (Royal Anglesey and Royal Monmouthshire) Siege Companies (which each counted as 2 Army Troops companies) and New Army units. They were intended particularly for work on water supply, road construction and repair, and hutting in corps areas.

³ "French wire", a cylindrical framework of wire, which could be carried collapsed and flat, appeared for the first time in orders, but had been in use from February 1915 onwards.

Sept. trench walls, and ladders provided, for getting out of the trenches, one ladder 6 or 7½ feet long to every five yards of trench. All these preparations, which involved three weeks' and more work, were executed without any interference from the enemy worthy of mention, although he must plainly have heard entrenching tools being used on the hard chalk. Mining operations were pushed on, so that certain mines could be fired at the moment of assault under the enemy's parapet; and shallow tunnelled ways, known as "Russian saps", to be opened up at the last moment, were got ready under No Man's Land.¹

Arrangements were made by Sir John French, with Rear-Admiral R. H. S. Bacon commanding the Dover Patrol, for the co-operation of the Navy by a diversion on the Flanders coast.² In order to give the impression of an intended landing, a number of new troop motor lighters were brought to Dover, and the troops of the garrison were exercised in embarking in and landing from them. The monitors and other vessels were to shell the German coast batteries so as to suggest either that a landing was intended at Knocke, near the Dutch frontier, or that an advance was threatened along the coast from Nieuport.

¹ A "Russian sap" is a mined gallery run just below the surface of the ground, so that a trench can be rapidly formed when its covering is removed by explosives or digging. These saps were dug by the 180th Tunnelling Co. R.E.

² "Naval Operations", iii. pp. 151-3.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

21ST-25TH SEPTEMBER 1915

(Maps 8, 9 ; Sketches 17, 19)

THE PRELIMINARY BOMBARDMENT

THE experience gained in previous offensives had shown Map 9.
Sketch
19. that the 18-pdr. gun and 4.5-inch howitzer of the field artillery had not sufficient weight of projectile to destroy the German defences, either trenches and dug-outs or fortified positions in the villages. For the coming operations all the siege and heavy artillery that could be spared with safety from the remainder of the British front had therefore been assigned to the First Army. The total artillery available for bombardment on the entire eighteen-mile frontage of the First Army, north and south of the canal, included 110¹ super-heavy and heavy guns and howitzers, and 841 guns and howitzers of lighter natures, the former category being divided into three Groups: No. 1, No. 4 and No. 5 Heavy Artillery Reserve (H.A.R.). Of these No. 1 and No. 5 were allotted to the IV. and I. Corps, respectively, and No. 4 was to support the subsidiary attacks of the III. and Indian Corps.²

In view of the limited ammunition supply at the disposal of the B.E.F.³ the expenditure for the offensive had

¹ This total includes 28 60-pdrs. (5-inch), but excludes old pattern 5-inch howitzers, and 4.7-inch guns. See Table in Note I. at end of Chapter.

² There were also eight 155-mm. and four 105-mm. guns left in their positions by the French when the British took over the line south of the canal in May 1915.

³ Approximately, 35,000 rounds super-heavy and heavy, and over 500,000 for the field batteries. See details at end of Note I. at end of Chapter. The allotment for Messines 21 months later was 941,795 and 2,619,745 rounds, respectively, of which 540,541 were 6-inch howitzer and 120,934 were 8-inch howitzer.

21 Sept. to be carefully calculated, and for this purpose the programme of the intended operations was arranged in three phases. The first phase was to consist of a preliminary bombardment lasting for four days and nights; the second phase of two days' battle; and the third phase of four days' subsequent fighting, during which the artillery would take up new positions. Of the ten days' operations on which the calculations were thus based, the four days' preliminary bombardment was regarded as the most important, and two-thirds of the total ammunition available was allotted to it.

The number of guns, taking into account the amount of ammunition available, was, as already mentioned, considered insufficient by itself to prepare an assault on a frontage of more than two divisions, but it was anticipated that, in combination with gas, there would be no need for a thorough bombardment, and that there were enough guns to prepare and support the simultaneous assault of six divisions. In this case, the fire of the heavy batteries was to be distributed widely over the whole front and employed chiefly on the destruction of the villages, strong points and observation posts behind the German lines, and in fighting the hostile batteries. The field batteries were to devote themselves almost entirely to cutting the thick barbed wire entanglement that lay from ten to twenty yards in front of the whole length of the German trenches. For this work each field battery was allotted from 500 to 600 yards of the German front defences. The equally strong wire entanglement in front of the German second position was out of range of the field batteries, and, where possible, the work of cutting this was to be undertaken by the heavier artillery; but the smallness of the target and the difficulty of observation at such a range—5,000-7,000 yards—made the task impracticable, and it was not seriously attempted. At night the field batteries were to place barrages on the German communication trenches to prevent reliefs and supplies from being brought up to the front line.¹

In the event of the wind being unfavourable for gas,

¹ The undulating nature of the ground in the southern part of the battlefield made the placing of the field batteries a matter of some difficulty. Cover could be obtained, but if the guns were fired straight to the front, the trajectories did not clear the crest, and consequently fire had in some cases to be crossed. Thus it happened sometimes that the lanes cut in the enemy wire were diagonal and not apparent from the front opposite them.

alternative artillery orders were prepared with a view to supporting the attacks of the 15th and 9th Divisions against Loos village and the Hohenzollern Redoubt respectively. These attacks were to be backed up by all available heavy batteries, and by the field artillery of the divisions concerned, the field artillery of the divisions on either flank co-operating by the establishment of flanking barrages to the north and south of both attacks. The assault itself was to be preceded by an hour's bombardment of the German front defences, as heavy as the ammunition supply permitted, one hundred rounds being allotted for this period for each field gun, and sixty rounds for each howitzer (4·5-inch, 5-inch and 6-inch). The expenditure of this ammunition was to be so arranged that the bombardment gradually increased in intensity up to the moment of assault. After the assault, the bombardment beyond and on both sides of the divisional objectives was to be maintained until the divisions were firmly established in their new positions. 21 Sept.

The actual distribution of the artillery was however made on the assumption of an assault with a favourable wind, the employment of gas, and a general offensive of all six divisions south of the La Bassée canal.¹

The preliminary bombardment began as soon as observation was possible on the morning of the 21st September, and continued day and night until the morning of the assault. By day the bombardment was deliberate on a programme founded on air photographs, and closely observed both by aeroplanes and from the ground. By night the fire consisted chiefly of bursts of six rounds per battery, fired at irregular intervals by divisional sub-groups, with slight alterations of range and direction, special attention being paid to the roads, tracks and communication trenches leading up to the German front defences. The field batteries were also called upon at times by their affiliated infantry brigades to prevent the wire from being repaired by the Germans under cover of darkness. The heavy batteries were limited to ninety rounds a gun per 24 hours; the field batteries to 150 rounds a gun per 24 hours, including both shrapnel and high explosive.

¹ For further details of the organization and deployment of the artillery, see Note I. at end of Chapter. In addition to the guns, there were 14 trench-mortar batteries, each of four mortars of various patterns, 4-pdr., 4-inch, 2-inch and 1·5-inch. The batteries were allotted to infantry brigades, but, not being very portable, were of little use in the attack.

21 Sept. For the first two days of the bombardment, the weather was fine and clear, but, the wind during the middle hours of daylight being easterly and the chalky soil dry, clouds of dust and smoke drifted towards the O.P.'s, obscured the battlefield from the air, and made accurate shooting difficult. Little progress could be made with wire-cutting, especially with the wire of the second line. On the third day (23rd September) the weather broke, and it was dull and misty, the wind being variable, mainly between south-east and south but westerly in the evening. The conditions were unfavourable for the special air bombing offensive, but attacks were made by 34 aeroplanes. One bomb was dropped on the centre of a goods train near Somain, a railway junction 10 miles west of Valenciennes, and other hits were obtained on the track near Wallers, on the junction and on the line in front of the engine-sheds north of Valenciennes, and on a signal cabin near St. Amand. During the afternoon high-explosive shell from the heavy batteries on the southern sector of the front caused a big fire to break out in the buildings and cottages of Cité St. Pierre, on the far side of the Loos valley. This fire continued unabated for two days and nights, lighting up the night sky for many miles round. On the night of the 23/24th there was a violent thunderstorm with torrential rain, which made the communication trenches, cut in chalk, so slippery that movement was nearly impossible. On the 24th, there was rain and mist which prevented bombing; but shooting conditions slightly improved and much good work was done. The wind was southerly in the middle of the day, but changed to south-east and east-south-east towards evening; at night it changed back through south to south-west and in places to west. There was some rain or drizzle in the morning, and again after dark. On this night, the eve of the assault, the intensity of the bombardment was doubled, and every approach to the German front trenches kept under fire to prevent reliefs and supplies from reaching the defenders.

On each of the four days demonstrations and feint attacks had been made on the front of different divisions at varying hours to induce the Germans to man their trenches and to deceive them as to the hour of the actual assault. For this purpose various units were detailed to open two minutes' rapid fire with rifles and machine guns, bayonets were shown over the parapets, dummies were

moved about above them, men shouted, pipes played and ²⁴ Sept. bugles sounded the "charge". In several cases it had the desired effect: the Germans manned their parapet and the field batteries at once opened on them with shrapnel.

The German artillery did not show much activity throughout the period of the preliminary bombardment. The programme was therefore carried out according to plan and without interruption. Nevertheless, the results were not everywhere satisfactory. Although the counter-batteries appeared to have silenced the German guns, all the known enemy batteries came to life again on the 25th, having merely ceased fire when a shell fell near them. Owing to the wide area over which the bombardment was spread, the work was, in fact, only partially accomplished. There were neither enough guns nor ammunition to provide a volume of fire sufficient to destroy effectively either the villages, the strong points, the trenches or the wire entanglements.¹ Reports from artillery and infantry observers showed that practicable passages had been made through the wire at intervals along the front, but that in several places the wire was still thick and not yet passable. This was partly due to the fact that in places the entanglement was on a reverse slope and therefore difficult or impossible to see from the British observation posts, and partly to the fact that many of the batteries had only recently arrived from the United Kingdom, and were not adequately trained for wire-cutting, a process for which the greatest accuracy is essential. The casualties of the Germans were only slight during the bombardment. Their mined dug-outs, at intervals of fifty yards along the front trench, were twenty-five feet deep in the chalk below the front parapet and they were able to remain in them in safety throughout. The night firing was not sufficient to prevent reliefs and supplies from being sent forward, and, in some cases, reliefs took place on the night of the 24th/25th, so that the British assault was met by fresh troops.²

¹ As will be seen in the account of the German organization at the beginning of the battle (Note II. at end of Chapter) the enemy observed that the British artillery fire was less than the French; so much so that he drew the conclusion that "all seemed to point to an attack from the "French only". Schwarte, ii. p. 308.

² According to information obtained from the examination of prisoners and documents taken from prisoners and dead, the German casualties from the British artillery fire were slight, except in the *II. Battalion of the 157th Regiment* (in front of the 15th Division). The immunity was ascribed in some cases to the depth of the trenches, but in general

THE EVE OF THE ASSAULT

24 Sept. Seldom have the vagaries of the wind been watched with such tense anxiety as during the night of the 24th/25th September. A steady breeze of six to eight miles an hour from any point between north-west and south-west was required.¹ The arrangements for weather reports were in the hands of Captain E. Gold, the meteorologist attached to the Royal Flying Corps. He received four times a day messages from the Meteorological Office, London, giving observations at a number of places in Western Europe, made at 7 A.M. and 6 P.M., and in the British Isles at 1 P.M. and 1 A.M. Messages were also received from Paris, giving observations made at places in France at 7 A.M. and 1 or 2 P.M., and in two or three places at 6 P.M. These observations were plotted on charts to make the weather maps on which forecasts are based.

Forty gas officers, distributed all along the front of assault, had been specially trained in estimating wind velocity and direction, and every hour throughout the night reports came in from each of them to Lieut.-Colonel Foulkes (who worked in the same room as Captain Gold), and were recorded by directional flags on a large scale map.

Meteorological observers measured the wind at about a dozen places behind the British front. Prior to the battle the measurements of those observers who were stationed in the First Army area were compared daily by General Haig's staff with the forecasts received from Captain Gold.

On the afternoon of the 24th September, General Haig, in company with Generals Rawlinson and Gough, saw Captain Gold, who brought the chart of the 7 A.M. observations, and learned from him that, though conditions were not very favourable for a wind between south-west and north-west, there was just a chance of such a wind on the following morning.

On the next chart of 1 P.M. observations, the meteorological

to the fire being too long, and falling between the first and second trenches. It must be remembered that the trenches had not only a parapet, but a parados—that is a mound similar to the parapet, but on the reverse side of the trench—and it was practically impossible for ground observers to discover whether a shell burst in the trench behind the parapet, or behind the parados.

¹ The normal meteorological forecast refers to wind velocity at thirty feet above the ground. The corresponding speed at five feet, for gas, would be nine to thirteen miles an hour.

logist's opinion, given at 6 P.M., was that the wind would be on the border line between favourable and unfavourable, with a slight bias towards favourable. 24 Sept.

General Haig saw Captain Gold again just before 9 P.M., when the chart of 6 P.M. observations had been prepared, and learned from him that conditions had become more favourable, and that the wind, which was blowing at 6 P.M. from between east-south-east and south-east, would change through south to south-west or west.¹

The forecast, midnight to midnight, was:—"Wind southerly, changing to south-west or west, probably increasing to twenty miles an hour." The latter wind was well suited for the employment of gas, at any rate as regards direction, and General Haig thereupon ordered the troops for the attack to be put into the trenches and sent the following message to all concerned:—"The weather forecast at this hour, 9.45 P.M., indicates that a west or south-west wind may be anticipated to-morrow, 25th September. All orders issued for the attack with gas will therefore hold good. The hour of Zero will be notified later during the night."

Soon after 10 P.M. the westerly wind, though gentler than anticipated, began to arrive from the Channel, bringing with it a light rain or drizzle, and from that hour onwards throughout a dark, damp night, the whole battle area was in movement. In each division of the I. and IV. Corps, two brigades detailed for the assault moved forward from the reserve trenches and dug-outs along the "Up" trenches to relieve the brigade holding the front line. From Cuinchy, Cambrin, Noyelles, Vermelles, Mazingarbe and Les Brebis, long snake-like processions of men in single file groped along the slippery communication trenches towards the front and support lines. The front line brigades, on relief, moved back along the "Down" trenches to assembly positions in reserve. By 2.30 A.M. reports to the First Army showed that the reliefs had been completed, and that everything was ready for the assault. Several miles further back, the three divisions of the XI. Corps spent the night on the march moving forward to their positions in general reserve behind the battle front. The 21st Division marched to the area Beuvry—Béthune—Annezin, on an average

Map 8.
Sketch
17.

¹ No observations for 6 P.M. from places in France had then been received, nor any from Spain or Portugal. These, if they had been available, would have indicated the probable wind next morning as not further west than south-west, and weaker in velocity than was anticipated from the chart as it stood.

24 Sept. five miles behind the front, and the 24th Division to Noeux les Mines—Houchin—Hallicourt, on an average $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles behind the front ; whilst, behind them, the Guards Division moved to the neighbourhood of Allouagne, 6 miles west of Béthune, ready to advance into the battle as a final reserve.

During the night reports from the meteorological observers in the First Army area were received hourly. At 9 P.M. the wind had changed from south-east to south. By 10 P.M. it was south-south-west, and by midnight it was between south-west and west, but its speed at five feet above the ground was only two to four miles per hour. After midnight the wind remained in the south-west ; but at times the speed fell so low in some places that conditions could only be described as calm.

In the early hours of the 25th, the meteorological expert received from London and charted the 1 A.M. observations from places in the British Isles ; and when General Haig, with his Chief General Staff Officer, Major-General R. H. K. Butler, saw him at 3 A.M. Captain Gold expressed the opinion that conditions were still favourable for a south-west wind in the morning, but that some of the indications were less favourable than they had been and pointed towards a change back to south. Upon being asked by General Haig at what time the wind was likely to be most favourable, he stated that usually the wind began to increase after sunrise, and went on increasing in the forenoon ; and, in the case of a south-west wind, the increase of speed was accompanied by a change of direction towards west. Owing, however, to the general changes indicated, he considered that it would be unsafe to rely on the normal sequence following on this occasion, and that the most favourable time would probably be as soon as possible. General Haig thereupon fixed sunrise (5.50 A.M.) as Zero Hour, that is, the time for releasing the gas, the infantry assault being launched forty minutes afterwards, at 6.30 A.M.

By 5 A.M. it was comparatively light. With the dropping of the wind, the rainy night had turned to a misty and warm morning, with only a faint drizzle in places. When General Haig went out there was almost a calm ; but when, at his request, his senior A.D.C., Major A. F. Fletcher, lit a cigarette, the smoke drifted in puffs towards the north-east.

The commander of the First Army was now faced with

a more than usually grave responsibility.¹ On receiving 25 Sept. at 9.20 P.M. on the previous evening the forecast of a fair westerly wind he had ordered the general offensive with gas without hesitation; but, as it might be necessary if the wind changed or fell altogether to limit the operation to the alternative scheme, staff officers of corps had been ordered to stand by at their telephones to receive instructions. To attack without gas would mean heavy losses and little hope of success, with the further prospect that the enemy might, in broad daylight, open artillery fire on the mass of the assaulting troops assembled in the front trenches, and on the crowded traffic in the communication trenches, if an attempt were made to withdraw the units of the four divisions which would not be required for the limited attack.

After 5 A.M. the wind began to increase, but only slightly. At 5.15 A.M. General Haig gave the order to "carry on", and then went up to the top of his wooden look-out tower. As the minutes passed so still did the air seem that General Haig began to fear the gas might simply hang about the British trenches. One of his staff telephoned to the I. Corps to enquire whether it was possible to stop the arrangements for the attack. But the gas was due to be turned on within half an hour, and General Gough did not consider it practicable to get word in time to the front trenches and to all the batteries concerned. He therefore replied that it was too late to cancel the arrangements.² By 5.40 A.M. a slight breeze from the south-west had sprung up, gently rustling the leaves of the poplar trees, and conditions seemed more satisfactory.

The first grey light of dawn found the assaulting Map 9. brigades in their front positions, the men lying down in Sketch 19. the damp muddy trenches and shelters to get what rest they could before the hour of assault. From the British observation stations on Annequin Fosse and Fosse No. 5 de Béthune, the whole front could be clearly seen, from the

¹ Against this sentence in the typescript draft Field-Marshal Earl Haig wrote "Many thanks. H."

² Every preparation had been made to cancel at short notice the turning on of the gas. Between the higher formations, three routes were arranged, by telephone, telegraph and despatch riders. To pass the order on to the gas units officers, attended by runners, were stationed at special points. Each of these officers had ready twenty typewritten slips, "Attack postponed, taps NOT to be turned on until further notice". Further Lieut.-Colonel Foulkes had given instructions to all gas officers that if at certain places the wind was not favourable, the gas was not to be turned on there.

25 Sept. ugly flat-topped slag heap of Fosse 8 to the Loos Pylons, whose twin iron shafts rose up above the dark sky-line of Hill 70 beyond. The battle zone appeared a desolate empty waste.

At 5.50 A.M. an intense artillery bombardment was directed against the German front defences, and simultaneously the chlorine gas was released from the cylinders in the front line. Its yellowish white fumes, mixing with the smoke from the candles and with the white bursts of the smoke shell, formed together a barrier of dense cloud, thirty to fifty feet high along the entire battle front from opposite Lens to Givenchy, north of the La Bassée canal. Almost simultaneously, at varying intervals along the line, green, red and white rockets from the German trenches shot high into the air as signal for artillery support, and to alarm the German reserves. Though the enemy had stood to arms at 3.30 A.M., at 5.15 A.M. everything appearing normal; he had relaxed his vigilance¹ and the British attack at dawn caught him unawares, the gas being a complete surprise.

As the sun rose unseen behind a cloud-covered sky the wind, although favourable, varying from between south-south-west and south-west, did not increase, and in places was scarcely perceptible; the gas and smoke seemed to many to hang about the British front trenches, or drift slowly up the line from right to left. Actually, its progress and effect varied in different places. In front of Loos and in the Hohenzollern sector, the cloud carried fairly well over the German trenches, and was to exert a marked influence on the advance of the 47th, 15th and 9th Divisions, only failing of full success because it moved too slowly and there was not enough of it. At the southern end of the attack it is known for certain that the gas cloud, after thirty-

¹ "26th Regt.", ii. p. 295, states: (This regiment had two battalions in the line immediately to the south of the British front of attack): "At 3.15 A.M. [English time] 25th September companies in front line received a message: 'Enemy will attack at dawn—information 'from an Indian deserter'. At 3.30 A.M. everyone was at his post, bayonets fixed, hand-grenades given out and a reserve of ammunition 'put ready'. At 5.15 A.M., as nothing had happened, the trench garrison was allowed to return to its dug-outs, two men per group remaining on the look-out.

The gas came undoubtedly as a surprise to the enemy. A report from the German *Second Army*, signed "von Below" and dated 11th October 1915, captured in 1916, says "Nothing was noticed of preparations for a gas attack". A captured document of the *IV. Corps*, dated 27th September 1915, says the same. See Note IV. at end of Chapter: "The Effect of the Gas on the Enemy".

five minutes' flow, was still short of the enemy parapet.¹ 25 Sept. In the centre, on both sides of the Vermelles—Hulluch road, it drifted in the right direction at first; but towards the end of the discharge began to float back towards the British trenches, causing great inconvenience and some loss. In other places, particularly on the 2nd Division front, the discharge had to be discontinued at once, and no gas reached the German trenches. From about the Hohenzollern Redoubt southward it appeared that the smoke discharge would fulfil its purpose of concealing the approach of the British.

The drizzle of rain had cleared, leaving a thin ground mist, when, at 6.30 A.M., the infantry clambered out of the trenches, and in the fog of gas and smoke, which made it difficult to pick up landmarks, began the advance across No Man's Land. They were in fighting dress—without greatcoat and pack—but cumbered with bombs, picks and shovels, and extra rations.² All ranks wore the original pattern smoke helmet—a flannel bag—over their heads, but with the front rolled up, and had a second helmet in their haversacks. With the front down they could hardly see through the talc-covered eye-holes, and with the front up the rain caused the chemicals in the flannel to soak out and irritate the eyes.³ At the moment of the infantry assault, the artillery on the whole front lifted⁴ from the front defences, shelled each line of trench in rear, and then formed a barrage across the German communication trenches and approaches to prevent the arrival of reinforcements, and stop the retreat of the defenders. This was continued for thirty-five minutes, when the batteries lifted again and bombarded the German second position and the strong points and the obstacles to the infantry advance in front of it.

¹ "Regt. No. 26", p. 295. See Note IV. at end of Chapter.

² Riflemen carried 200 rounds S.A.A., 3 sandbags, iron ration and an extra cheese ration; bombers, 20 bombs, a bludgeon, 120 rounds S.A.A. and 3 sandbags. Each hundred men carried 25 picks and shovels, and each platoon one wirecutter and a large disc on a pole to indicate position to the artillery.

³ Near Hulluch, and no doubt elsewhere, the gas hung about in the air, causing the eyes to smart, until late into the night of the 25th.

⁴ That is the range was lengthened from trench line to trench line in the hostile lines, but the intermediate ground was not being systematically searched by a gradual increase of elevation as in the later "creeping barrages"; yet the number of trench lines was so considerable that something of the nature of a creeping barrage resulted. On the I. Corps front, however, just before the actual assault, an 18-pdr. shrapnel barrage swept forward and then backward over the enemy's defence zone.

NOTE I

THE ORGANIZATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARTILLERY

The Battle of Loos is a landmark in the history of artillery development. It was the first British attack on a large scale (11,200 yards of front), although, owing to the employment of cloud gas, the total force of artillery in proportion to the frontage was much weaker than at Neuve Chapelle (frontage 1,450 yards) and Festubert (bombardment frontage 5,080 yards). In spite of the fact that there was a prolonged and systematic bombardment, the number of guns and amount of ammunition (although nearly three times as much per yard as at Festubert) available were not sufficient to make it formidable. For the first time there was a corps artillery organization, under the I. and IV. Corps, all divisional artillery being placed directly under the general officers commanding Royal Artillery of corps until the hour of assault. This permitted a systematic co-ordination of all preliminary measures:—the allotment of observation posts, the organization of communications and the supply of ammunition, thorough reconnaissance, maximum use of enfilade fire, co-operation in wire cutting and harassing fire, and with the Royal Flying Corps. A certain number of heavy howitzers (under Br.-General W. J. Napier) were placed under the corps for bombardment, but the counter-battery work was still carried out by the independent H.A.R. Groups. The experience gained sounded, however, the death-knell of the system of dividing the control of artillery in corps areas.

The organization of a Heavy Artillery Reserve (H.A.R.) at the end of February 1915 had been extended during the summer months to include all the siege and heavy artillery (4·7 inch gun and upwards) of the B.E.F. During the winter of 1914–15 the heavy batteries that were originally part of the organization of an infantry division had been withdrawn from their respective units,¹ and together with the siege artillery in France were now formed into five groups of the H.A.R., under Br.-Generals G. McK. Franks, H. C. C. Uniacke, A. C. Currie, W. St. C. Bland, and T. A. Tancred. By this method the Commander-in-Chief was able to attach a group or groups to Armies or corps when and where necessary.

Early in September the H.A.R. was organized for the impending offensive. Nos. 1, 4 and 5 Groups were sent into the zone of the First Army, Nos. 2 and 3 Groups being left with the Second Army in the sector Ypres—Armentières.

The following table gives the detail of the guns in action with the First Army on 25th September 1915:—

		MAIN ASSAULT. (I. and IV. Corps)	SUBSIDIARY ACTIONS. (III. and Ind. Corps)	Total
Siege and Heavy Artillery	15-inch how.	3	—	3
	9·2-inch guns (on rail- way truck)	2	—	2
	9·2-inch. how.	10	2	12
	8-inch how.	16	—	16
	6-inch guns ²	5	8	13
	4-inch „ ²	1	—	1

¹ This applies only to the British First and Second Armies. The heavy batteries with the recently formed Third Army, on the Curlu (on the Somme)—Hébuterne front, remained with their divisions.

² No. 1 Armoured Train consisted of one 6-inch gun, one 4-inch gun and one machine gun.

		MAIN ASSAULT. (I. and IV. Corps)	SUBSIDIARY ACTIONS. (III. and Ind. Corps)	Total.
Counter Batteries	60-pdr.	24	4	28
	4.7-inch guns	12	22	34
	6-inch how. (attached)	36	—	36
	5-inch "	8	—	8
Divisional Field Artillery	4.5-inch how.	72	64	136
	18-pdr. Q.F.	304	300	604
	15-pdr. B.L.C. ¹	26	—	26
	18-pdr. Q.F.	4	4	8
	Anti-Aircraft	4	4	8
	2.75-inch guns	6	—	6

The artillery of the I. Corps was placed under the command of Br.-General J. F. N. Birch. It consisted of the field artillery of the 2nd, 7th and 9th Divisions, reinforced by twelve batteries of the XI. Corps and No. 7 Mountain Battery (less one section) of 2.75-inch guns. No. 5 Group H.A.R. (Br.-General T. A. Tancred) was in its area, and worked in the closest touch with Br.-General Birch, complying with his requests in all matters other than as regards counter-battery work.

The artillery of the IV. Corps was under the command of Br.-General C. E. D. Budworth. It consisted of the field artillery of the 1st, 15th and 47th Divisions, reinforced by eight batteries of the XI. Corps artillery and one section of No. 7 Mountain Battery. In the IV. Corps area was No. 1 Group H.A.R. (under Br.-General G. McK. Franks, who also commanded all the counter-batteries on the First Army front).

Thus Br.-General Birch had direct command of the field artillery in the I. Corps, to which was attached a group of 6-inch howitzers; affiliated to the I. Corps Artillery was No. 5 H.A.R. Group, whilst No. 1 H.A.R. Group co-operated by unofficial agreement, an arrangement even more confusing in practice than on paper.

On the front of the main assault south of the canal the heavy batteries could not be brought up nearer than 3,000-4,000 yards behind the front infantry trenches, owing to the open character of the ground which was fully exposed to the German observation posts at Fosse 8, Loos and Cité St. Pierre, the north-western suburb of Lens. The general line taken up by the heavy batteries prior to the bombardment was therefore from south to north Les Brebis—Mazingarbe—Noyelles—Annequin. The field batteries were similarly handicapped in choice of position, and, except in the most southern sector of the battle zone, where the cottages of North and South Maroc offered cover, the positions taken up were all in rear of a line north and south of Vermelles, 2,500-3,000 yards behind the British front trenches. Nevertheless from these positions the heavy artillery could bring effective fire on the strong points and villages in and behind the German second position, and the field batteries could deal adequately, as far as time shrapnel was effective, with the wire entanglements of the German first line.

¹ In addition, in IV. Corps reserve were ten 15-pdrs. of the 1/6th London Artillery Brigade (47th Divisional Artillery).

There were available, on 25th September, the divisional artillery of the XI. Corps (Guards, 21st and 24th Divisions) in general reserve. Of the twelve brigades R.F.A. of these three divisions only five were sent forward to take part in the preliminary bombardment and the first assault.

As it turned out, in spite of the exposure of the British batteries and the great advantage the enemy possessed by reason of facilities for concealment, he succeeded in putting very little of the British artillery out of action; indeed batteries judged to be the most exposed suffered scarcely at all.

To ensure the close co-operation of the artillery with the infantry, the divisional artillery was organized into sub-groups, each sub-group being affiliated to one of the infantry brigades of its division. The telephonic communication between batteries and the various infantry and artillery headquarters was carried out by buried cables (insufficiently deep as it proved), and some of the lines were duplicated or triplicated. The work involved is shown by the fact that IV. Corps headquarters estimated that six to eight hundred miles of telephone wire were required for its sector of the front alone.

Comprehensive preparations were made for the participation of the artillery in the battle itself and during the subsequent advance. To support the infantry with the least delay, the artillery command was decentralized as much as possible as soon as the assault began, and each infantry division was then to work direct with its own artillery group and with certain units of the H.A.R. without reference to corps headquarters.¹

All batteries, both field and heavy, were ready to advance as early as possible in the event of a general break-through of the German defences. Lines of advance were reconnoitred, and the position of the bridges that were to be constructed at once across the lines of trenches was made known to all concerned.

The following table shows the detail of the principal forms of ammunition allotted.²

		High Explosive.	Shrapnel.	Total.
Siege and Heavy	15-inch howitzer	338	—	338
	9·2-inch "	4,500	—	4,500
	8-inch "	5,500	—	5,500
	6-inch gun	1,900	—	1,900
Counter Batteries	60-pdr.	9,900	5,000	14,900
	4·7-inch gun	5,400	2,000	7,400
	6-inch howitzer	19,900	—	19,900
Divisional Field	5-inch "	4,800	—	4,800
	4·5-inch "	54,400	2,000	56,400
Artillery	18-pdr.	75,200	296,500	371,700
	15-pdr.	—	12,100	12,100
	13-pdr.	18,000	18,000	36,000

NOTE II

GUN AMMUNITION EXPENDITURE

Throughout the narrative the shortage of artillery ammunition has been emphasized. There were not in 1915 sufficient guns and shell to make a breach in, that is to demolish, the enemy's defences.

To illustrate this, the comparative figures of the ammunition expended in the preliminary bombardments in 1915, at Festubert (three days, 13th-15th May), and Loos (four days, 21st-24th September), and in 1917 at Messines (twelve days, 26th May-6th June),

¹ They reverted to corps control if the advance was held up.

² For its distribution, see page 164.

are given below for the principal natures of guns. The very large 25 Sept. amount used at Messines, in combination with nineteen gigantic mines containing just short of a million pounds of high explosive, achieved the desired result of making a breach on a wide front.

	Festubert.	Loos.	Messines.
<i>Field Artillery :</i>			
18-pdr.	22,602	203,124	1,977,499
4.5-inch howitzer	4,014	30,568	642,246
Total Field Artillery Shell	26,616	233,692	2,619,745
<i>Heavy Artillery :</i>			
60-pdr.	1,107	4,987	175,479
6-inch howitzer	2,848	11,241	540,541
6-inch gun	191	340	13,647
8-inch howitzer	—	3,218	120,934
9.2-inch howitzer	443	2,239	83,664
12-inch howitzer	—	—	6,717
15-inch howitzer	16	216	803
Total Heavy Artillery Shell	4,605	22,191	941,785

NOTE III

THE GERMAN FORCES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE

The German infantry holding the line opposite the six divisions of the First Army on the front of attack—the dispositions were correctly shown on the map issued by the Intelligence Section—were four regiments of the 117th¹ and 14th Divisions belonging, respectively, to the IV. and VII. Corps. From south to north, the 22nd Reserve, 157th and 11th Reserve Regiments of the 117th Division, and the 16th (with which was incorporated the 11th Jäger Battalion) of the 14th Division of Neuve Chapelle fame.

North of the canal the remainder of the 14th Division (the 56th and 57th Regiments) carried on the line as far as Violaines, with the 13th Division beyond it.

For the purpose of defence, each regiment had one battalion in front line, one in support, 500 to 1,000 yards in rear, and the third in rest billets four to five miles behind the front. In case of attack it was not expected that the resting battalions would be able to reach the battlefield for at least three hours after the first alarm, when they would probably occupy the second line of defence.

On the 21st August a French deserter gave the enemy notice that a great attack would take place on the 15th September, and his information was confirmed by unconcealed signs of intensive work and by identification of new divisions on the Champagne front, which was recognized as the principal scene of operations. In Artois such reinforcements as the Sixth Army had available were

¹ The 117th Division was a reconstituted division of the new three-regiment (instead of four) type; formed in April 1915, it had taken part in the heavy fighting against the French on Vimy ridge in May and June, and, after reorganization at Roubaix, had been sent into the line again on the 9th July.

Maps 8,
9.
Sketch
19.

25 Sept. assembled on the French front, the German command believing that the Artois attack would not extend north of Notre Dame de Lorette, and that the British would content themselves with "partial attacks or diversions". This view was strengthened by the facts that the British infantry did little spade work and the British artillery fired less than the French during the preliminary bombardment, and by the statements of another French deserter on the 24th, who said that a great attack would be begun at 4 A.M. next day, with its weight south of the Scarpe, that is south of Arras.¹

The only reserves near at hand were the *2nd Guard Reserve Division*, in reserve to the *VII. Corps*, billeted about Allennes, seven miles east of La Bassée, north of the canal, and the *8th Division*, the reserve of the *IV. Corps*, assembled at Douai, 12 miles from the front at Lens, with heavy artillery, and at the special disposal of the *Sixth Army*. The general reserve of the *Sixth Army*, approximately three divisions, including *Landwehr* and recruit Depots, was in Lille and Valenciennes, and could not be expected to have any influence on the battle for at least twelve to fifteen hours after the first alarm. The only formations at the immediate disposal of the Supreme Command were the *Guard Corps* and *X. Corps*. The two divisions of the former, which, in anticipation of an offensive on the Western front, had been entrained at Warsaw and Novo-Georgievsk on the 15th September, detrained in the Charleroi and Nivelles area between the 18th and 20th. The *X. Corps* entrained at Bialystock on 17th September, and began to detrain in the Malines area on the 21st. On the 25th its two divisions were diverted via Namur and Givet to the Champagne front, and the *Guard Corps* was despatched to the Artois front, the *1st Division* to Douai opposite the French, and the *2nd* to Seclin (6 miles south of Lille), opposite the British.

As regards artillery on the front, in addition to the nine field batteries and three light howitzer batteries with each division (*2nd Guard Reserve* and *117th* had six instead of nine field batteries), the heavy artillery of the *IV. Corps* consisted of six 5·9-inch howitzer batteries; one and a half 11-inch mortar batteries, and one 4-inch, one 4·8-inch and one 5·9-inch gun batteries. The *VII. Corps* had two 5·9-inch howitzer batteries; one 11-inch mortar battery; one 4-inch, half a 4·8-inch, and one 5·9-inch gun batteries: a total for the two corps of 64 heavy pieces. Roughly one half of this total was on the Loos front of attack opposed to treble the number of British heavy (5-inch and upwards) guns, which however had the destruction of defences as well as counter-battery work to carry out. The mass of the enemy artillery was exceedingly well concealed, many of the batteries being among the houses of Lens.

NOTE IV

THE EFFECT OF THE GAS ON THE ENEMY

Owing to the changes in the direction of the wind, the irregularities in the trace of the front trenches and the varying distance across No Man's Land, the effects produced by the gas differed con-

¹ Schwarte, ii. pp. 290-1 and 306-8.

siderably along the German front.¹ The great secrecy maintained throughout the preparations for the discharge—a most striking proof of the loyalty and silence of all ranks²—resulted in complete surprise. On the right, for example, prisoners (*22nd Reserve Regiment*) taken by the 47th Division stated that, although they watched the gas cloud approaching their trenches, they did not realize what it was until it reached them. Practically none had respirators on; some fell unconscious in the trench; others stumbled about as if drunk; but most of them quickly recovered. The immediate effect was a severe choking in the throat and a stinging pain in the eyes; but for hours afterwards it was noticed that those affected suffered from loss of memory. A German officer in this sector remarked that, as soon as the gas entered his trench, he lost all control over his men, a panic ensued and he was unable to keep them in the front line. He said that, without the gas, we should have had no earthly chance of taking his trenches, as the barbed wire was still strong in front, and his dug-outs were undamaged by the bombardment.

25 Sept.

In the centre, opposite the 15th, 1st and 7th Divisions, the effect varied extremely. Some of the prisoners (*157th Regiment*) taken here, when questioned about the gas, laughed at it; but these may have been in places to which the gas did not reach, or where only the smoke passed. In the Hohenzollern sector, opposite the 9th Division, owing perhaps to the salient position of the Redoubt, the gas produced a great effect, drifting right across the work from south to north; most of the garrison (*11th Reserve Regiment*) abandoned it before the assault, either on account of the gas, or owing to its accurate bombardment by 9.2 howitzers,³ many running back into the barrage in rear to be killed. Only opposite the 2nd Division were the Germans (*14th Division*) prepared to meet a gas attack.

The following quotation from the official narrative of the German *Sixth Army*, entitled "The Autumn Battle La Bassée—Arras", is given in "Schwarte", ii. p. 309.

"After the British had bombarded the line with the heaviest drum-fire from 5.20 A.M. [British time] to 6.30 A.M., and from 8 A.M. to 8.15 A.M. (*sic*), they began a gas attack on a grand scale against the whole sector of the *117th Division*. At intervals of ten to fifteen minutes, three to four smoke clouds, and immediately after each except the last, a gas cloud moving with one to two metres per second velocity rolled towards the occupied trenches. A light even west wind impelled it forward. The smoke was dirty white, the gas yellowish red [*sic*]. The clouds soon reached a height of fifty metres. Simultaneously the British artillery fired shell that emitted heavy smoke and stink-gas. Gas and smoke hung about until 11 A.M., and stretched eastward, always losing density, as far as the divisional headquarters in Wingles, 2½ miles behind the line. As the wind was slight, the clouds dispersed very slowly. In depressions the gas lay thick and obstinately; at other places smoke had the upper hand, and made the air far too dark to see through. Near the enemy one could

¹ The *Reichsarchiv* is unable to say from the documents available what number of gas casualties was suffered by the Germans.

² These words were added at the suggestion of Field-Marshal Earl Haig.

³ See Chapter XII.

"not see more than three paces, in Wingles barely thirty. In general, "the physical effect on the men was trifling."

A captured document of the *IV. Corps*, dated 27th September 1915, stated that at 1,500 metres from the British trenches, the artillery was in great danger from gas. Guns and rifles quickly became rusted, breech-blocks became unusable. It was impossible to give orders. The respirators (old type) were satisfactory at first, but with the ever-recurring gas clouds, they gradually became less effective.

The *56th Regiment*, north of the canal opposite the 2nd Division, in a document (*VII. Corps* headquarters, 1^a No. 6/27 of 27th September 1915), subsequently captured, reported: "At 6.45 A.M. a thick white gas cloud was discharged from the British trenches against our position. Isolated observers stated that it had a bluish colour. The cloud came over our trenches, and after about five to ten minutes, a second and later a third. A strong chlorine smell was noticed. Between each cloud the air was clear and pure. The bulk of the gas disappeared over our trenches, but the lower layer sank down into them. Fires built on the parapet appeared to cause the gas to dissipate. The gas masks were satisfactory." The report further states that there were only 72 gas casualties in hospital, amongst them a number of officers, a large proportion being cases of unconsciousness, some of bronchitis, and some discharge from the mouth. "No death so far recorded."

The following is the account of an officer of the *26th Regiment* (Part ii. pp. 295-6 of its regimental history), posted just at the southern end of the attack.¹ He was just having a cup of coffee in his dug-out, when he was alarmed by his sergeant-major: "Gas attack". He rushed to the edge of the trench. "A yellow white smoke welled from the British trenches at intervals of fifteen metres. I ordered: gas masks on and man the trench. In two minutes all was ready—No one to fire before the word is given. There was no doubt that the attack had come. The British trenches could no longer be seen. The gas cloud came near. In ten minutes it reached the first wire entanglement, and was fifteen metres high. Now the British artillery took a hand. Howling and slaying, the shrapnel raged over our trenches. The communication trenches were ploughed up by shell. At 6.25 A.M. the gas cloud reached our second wire entanglement, and was thirty metres from our trenches. I gave the word 'Fire' and everyone shot into the cloud. The machine guns clattered. All around us was now white mist. Breathing was difficult. The gas masks helped a little, however. In front of the first platoon the British clambered out of their trenches. Our fire compelled them to return. . . . At 7.10 A.M. the cloud lifted, and went northwards."

The following words occur in a German communiqué for the 25th September 1915: "This retirement was not the result of the British commander's abilities, but was the consequence of a successful surprise attack with intoxicating gases".

¹ The *26th Regiment* of the *7th Division* covered Lens.

NOTE V

RAILHEADS AND MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE BATTLE

The supply railheads on the 25th September for the battle of Loos were :—

Chocques (3 miles west of Béthune on the Hazebrouck—Béthune line) for the IV. Corps and its divisions.

Béthune, for the I. Corps troops and 2nd Division ;

Fouquereuil (2 miles south-west of Béthune on the St. Pol—Béthune line) for the 7th and 9th Divisions ;

Lillers (on the Hazebrouck—Béthune line) for the XI. Corps and its divisions ;

Aire (on the St. Omer—Armentières branch line) for the Cavalry Corps and 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions ;

Arques, for the 2nd Cavalry Division.

The ammunition railheads were :—

St. Venant and Lapugnoy for the First Army ;

Strazeele for the Cavalry Corps.

A full description of the medical organization is given in the Official History of the Medical Services, Volume II., which contains a map giving the situation of the Medical units of the First Army, and sketch maps of the divisional arrangements.

Roughly, there were in the First Army Area 16 Advanced Dressing Stations in the battle area Grenay—Vermelles—Cambrin—Givenchy—Beuvry—Sailly Labourse, besides 13 north of this. There were 15 Main Dressing Stations, principally in and between Noeux les Mines and Béthune, and 14 north of the canal ; and 13 Casualty Clearing Stations :—at Lapugnoy (4 miles south-west of Béthune on the St. Pol line), Lozinghem (2 miles west of Lapugnoy), Chocques, Béthune, Lillers (3), Aire (2), St. Venant and Merville (3), with accommodation for 11,568. There were advanced operation centres at Noeux les Mines and Bac St. Maur (south-west of Armentières), and 17 ambulance trains, with capacity averaging 500 cases. Arrangements were made in the First Army to deal with 40,000 wounded.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

25TH SEPTEMBER 1915

(Maps 7, 9 and 10 ; Sketches 19, 20, 21, 22)

THE ATTACK OF THE IV. CORPS

Map 7. THE IV. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir H. S. Rawlinson), the right of the First Army, had as its first task the capture of the German front defences along the Grenay spur between the Double Crassier and the Vermelles—Hulluch road.¹ This accomplished, the advance was to be continued by the 15th and 1st Divisions ; but the right division, the 47th, was to halt astride the Loos valley between the Double Crassier and the Loos Crassier (both inclusive),² and form a defensive flank, including the “Chalk Pit”,³ facing Lens. The 15th and 1st Divisions were to press on over Hill 70 and the Lens road, through the German second position between Cité St. Auguste and Hulluch, and thence to the line of the Haute Deule canal. The right of the 15th Division was to be directed on the Lens—Carvin road a couple of miles east of Cité St. Auguste, where it was expected to get in touch with the French Tenth Army advancing south of Lens ; but the Lens—Henin Liétard road was fixed as the boundary between the French and British. Sir H. Rawlinson, like all the senior officers of the First Army, was completely under the impression that the Commander-in-Chief expected a break-through, and

¹ For the IV. Corps operation order and memorandum, see Appendices 17 and 18.

² These great embankments are described later.

³ Two “Chalk Pits” occur in the account of the battle, the one, now referred to, near Loos Crassier ; the other north-east of Loos on the Lens—La Bassée road. The spinney near the former was called Chalk Pit Copse, the one near the latter, Chalk Pit Wood.

would have his reserves close up to exploit it. The attack of the IV. Corps was, therefore, to be "pressed home to the utmost extent of its power", and no corps reserve was detailed. 25 Sept.

The IV. Corps artillery was to assist the advance of the assaulting divisions, and to conform to it as soon as practicable. For this purpose, the 47th Division artillery, reinforced by the mass of No. 1 Group H.A.R., was to move forward and form a "pivot buttress" on the right about Mazingarbe (1½ miles N.N.W. of Grenay) and Les Brebis (1 mile north-west of Grenay), facing Lens, ready to fight and silence the German batteries in Lens. The 15th Division artillery was to advance to positions close behind the British original front trenches and form a strong centre between North Maroc and Fosse 7 near the Béthune—Lens road, where the batteries would be covered by the crest of the Grenay spur. The 1st Division artillery was to move forward by Le Rutoire (E.S.E. of Vermelles) and take up a position between Lone Tree (1 mile north of Loos) and the Vermelles—Hulluch road in the shallow saucer-shaped depression behind the British front line.

The force of German infantry available to oppose the assault of the IV. Corps was small: in all, two regiments (six battalions).¹

The operations of the divisions of the IV. Corps will be narrated from right to left, in turn.

47TH DIVISION

THE DOUBLE CRASSIER, THE CHALK PIT AND LOOS CRASSIER

The 47th Division (Major-General C. St. L. Barter) held a front of 2,500 yards along the western edge of the head of the Loos valley. Its right rested on the Grenay—Lens railway, where it joined hands with the 81st Territorial Division of the French XXI. Corps (General Maistre), which held the passive front opposite Lens and was not to advance. Its left was a quarter of a mile short of the Béthune—Lens road.² Behind its front trenches were the dump and buildings of Fosse 5, and the mass of cottages of North and South Maroc. The most easterly houses of North Maroc were converted into artillery observation stations, and

¹ The 22nd Reserve Regiment faced the 47th Division, the 157th Regiment, the 15th and 1st Divisions.

² For the divisional operation order, see Appendix 19.

25 Sept. were known as "Artillery Row"; whilst the cellars of both villages provided excellent accommodation for storing ammunition and supplies, and for the dressing stations of the medical service. Amongst the special arrangements made it may be mentioned that drinking water was laid on to the front trenches by gravitation from Maroc. Apparently for the first time, a definite proportion of officers, N.C.O.'s and men of every company was held back in reserve to be sent up as reinforcements when required, a practice which eventually became universal on days of battle.

In front of the division was the open valley south-west of Loos, about fifteen hundred yards across; but along the top of its far (eastern) side, the Cité spur, stood the outermost buildings of the north-western suburbs of Lens, that is the mass of cottages of Cité St. Pierre and Cité St. Edouard, including the buildings of Fosse 11 and Fosse 12. In the valley itself there were no houses, except an estaminet and some farm buildings at the junction of the South Maroc—Loos and Béthune—Lens roads, known as "Valley Cross Roads", immediately south-west of Loos cemetery. There was no obstacle to free movement except the great dumps of Fosse 11 and Fosse 12. The waste from these pits, instead of being piled up into pyramids near them, had been shot into the valley, forming high embankments that projected into and overlooked it. The waste from Fosse 11 made two long parallel embankments known as the Double Crassier, 1,200 yards in length, extending as far as the German front defences on the western slope of the valley; the southern branch was about one hundred feet high at its western end, and the northern only slightly lower. The waste of Fosse 12 formed one great single embankment, the Loos Crassier, about eight hundred yards in length and nearly a hundred and fifty feet high. At its northern end, which falls like a cliff to the village of Loos, were the two lattice-girder wheel houses known as the "Loos Pylons" or "Tower Bridge", that stood up above both the village and the Crassier.

Two brigades of the 47th Division, the 140th and 141st, were to move forward and form the defensive flank between and including these two crassiers. In doing this they would have to advance down the open slope of the Loos valley exposed in every detail to the German second position along the Cité spur. As it would be impracticable under these conditions to dig trenches during daylight, the objective

given to the two brigades was the line of some German 25 Sept. trenches. The 140th Brigade (Br.-General G. J. Cuthbert), on the right, had as its final objective the eight hundred yards of the German support trench from about the centre of the Double Crassier northwards to the Béthune—Lens road, entailing an advance of over eleven hundred yards. Two battalions, the 1/7th London (City of London) and the 1/6th London (Rifles) (Lieut.-Colonels E. Faux and W. F. Mildren), were detailed both for the assault and for the subsequent consolidation of the new position. The 1/8th London (Post Office Rifles) and 1/15th London (Prince of Wales's Own Civil Service Rifles) (Lieut.-Colonels J. Harvey and H. V. Warrender) were to remain in the German front trenches in brigade reserve.¹

The task of the 141st Brigade (Br.-General W. Thwaites) was more complicated. Its first objective, after passing the German front line in the first rush, was the southern sector of the Loos defences, a thousand yards beyond, between the Béthune—Lens road and Loos cemetery, at the south-west corner of the village, to the left of the objective of the 140th Brigade. For this purpose, Br.-General Thwaites placed only one battalion, the 1/18th London (London Irish Rifles) (Lieut.-Colonel J. P. Tredennick) in its front line, with the 1/20th London (Blackheath and Woolwich) and 1/19th London (St. Pancras) (Lieut.-Colonels A. B. Hubback and H. D. Collison-Morley) refused, on its right and left flank respectively. These three battalions

¹ Of the 47th Divisional Engineers (Lieut.-Colonel S. D'A. Crookshank, C.R.E.) two sections of a field company R.E. (which consists of a headquarters and four sections) were allotted to each attacking brigade, and closely accompanied it in the assault; the remainder of each company being available to reinforce or replace the forward sections. The third field company was held in divisional reserve. It eventually was sent up to Loos to relieve a field company of the 15th Division. In one or two other divisions a whole field company was, with very poor results, withdrawn from divisional control and put in the hands of the brigade commander, who attached a section to each battalion. In some, the greater part of the engineers was sent forward after the infantry to consolidate special points, or kept back in reserve till they could usefully be employed. This latter was the principle advocated by the Engineer-in-Chief. The engineers who accompanied the assaulting infantry suffered heavy casualties—one company lost five out of six officers; another 60 per cent of its strength—and were then unable, from lack of numbers, to accomplish any useful work. It was soon recognized that it was best to leave the Royal Engineers behind until there was work for them, and then to send back guides to bring them up. There is no room in the narrative to give details, but it may be assumed that every brigade had some engineers with it, and, unless otherwise mentioned, the engineers held in reserve were mainly employed in keeping road and trench communication open and bridges serviceable.

25 Sept. were, however, to advance to the attack together. On capturing the Loos Defences trench, the 1/18th London was to halt, and the 1/20th and 1/19th were to pass by and through it on their way to other objectives. Pressing on through the southern houses of Loos, these two battalions, now forming the front of the 141st Brigade, were to wheel to the right, the 1/20th London to the line Chalk Pit—Copse, and the 1/19th London, carrying on the line, to the “ Mine “ buildings and (Loos) Crassier—Puits 15 ”. The positions gained were to be consolidated for defence and held at all costs. The fourth battalion—1/17th London (Poplar and Stepney Rifles) (Lieut.-Colonel J. Godding)—in brigade reserve, was to be left in the original British front trenches.

In the third brigade of the division, the 142nd (Br.-General F. G. Lewis), the 1/21st London (First Surrey Rifles) and 1/22nd London (The Queen’s) (Lieut.-Colonels H. B. P. L. Kennedy and E. J. Previt ) were to take part only with fire, remaining in position in the front line on a frontage of twelve hundred yards from opposite the Double Crassier southwards to the point of junction with the French. The 1/23rd London and 1/24th London (The Queen’s) (Lieut.-Colonels T. G. W. Newman and W. G. Simpson), with brigade headquarters, 2½ batteries, a field company R.E., the divisional mounted troops, and the Pioneer battalion were to assemble near Les Brebis (1 mile north-west of North Maroc) as a divisional reserve.

The 47th Division artillery (Br.-General J. C. Wray) was organized into two sub-groups. The northern sub-group, under Lieut.-Colonel E. B. Macnaghten, was to support the two assaulting brigades throughout their advance; the southern sub-group, under Lieut.-Colonel E. C. Massey, though specially in support of the 142nd Brigade, was to keep up a continuous fire on the German front trenches and on Cit  St. Pierre whilst the attack north of the Double Crassier was in progress.

Prior to the day of assault the battalions of the 47th Division rehearsed the attack near their billets behind Noeux les Mines, where General Barter had found a piece of ground somewhat resembling the front allotted to him. The sector of the German front defence system to be assaulted was marked out to full scale, the fighting trenches by white tape, the communication trenches by red tape, and the tactical points by flags. Companies were first exercised alone; when they were perfect, practice was held by battalions; and, finally, by brigades. A rehearsal

of this nature, first tried in preparation for the battle of Neuve Chapelle,¹ undoubtedly contributed in a great measure to the successful achievement of the division, and was to become a recognized preliminary to British offensives. The infantry of the 47th, and the other divisions, carried discs and flags to indicate when it had reached certain objectives, and a panorama sketch of the front to be attacked was issued to all ranks down to section leaders; but no provision was made to keep direction by compass bearing.²

At 6.30 A.M., forty minutes after the turning on of the gas, the successive lines of the 140th and 141st Brigades, at fifty paces distance, in extended order, advanced out of the Russian saps and assault trenches prepared by the engineers and the Pioneer battalion (1/4th Royal Welch Fusiliers); whilst to attract fire on the right the 1/21st and 1/22nd London of the 142nd Brigade worked a large array of head-and-shoulder dummy figures—used for the first time in the war—placed overnight on the brigade front in No Man's Land.³ In this sector the gas had travelled better than elsewhere, owing possibly to the slope of the ground into the Loos valley. The advance was also covered by a dense cloud of smoke from two batteries of Stokes mortars in South Maroc. The shells from these mortars bursting behind the German front defences had been intended to form a screen along the length of the Double Crassier to protect the advancing infantry from the view of the German artillery observers in Lens; but the direction of the wind caused the resulting smoke cloud to drift down the valley towards Loos village, which it eventually enveloped. Within a few minutes, both brigades—men of the 1/18th London dribbling a football in front of them—coming up behind the curtain of smoke and gas, entered the enemy front trench.⁴ Immediately the gas

¹ See "1915" Vol. I, p. 82.

² At manoeuvres in England before the war, where hedges and other obstructions to view were frequent, the companies in some divisions detailed a "navigating officer" responsible for keeping direction. This necessary arrangement seems to have been overlooked in the war training of the new divisions.

³ They were frequently employed later, attacks ("Chinese Attacks") being simulated in the early morning by rows of figures in different attitudes, pulled up in successive lines.

⁴ The two brigades were immediately opposed by two companies of the German 22nd Reserve Regiment, which held the front defences between the Double Crassier and the Béthune—Lens road. The other two companies of the front battalion of this regiment held from south of the Double Crassier to the Grenay—Lens railway, a sector that was not attacked.

25 Sept. was released the enemy had opened heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, but it was very wild and high, and gradually died down. The Londoners arrived in time to catch many of the garrison of the front trench in the act of emerging from their deep dug-outs into the gas and smoke. Some Germans on the front of the London Irish fought stoutly with the bayonet, but most of the defenders soon broke and ran; and as they fled across the open they came under the fire of machine guns east of North Maroc that had formed a most effective barrage behind the German trenches over the heads of the infantry.¹ With the exception of two machine-gun crews, who were able to cause considerable loss before they were surrounded and captured, the Germans who remained surrendered without offering further opposition. But enfilade machine-gun fire from Cité St. Pierre on the right continued, and the guns could not be located or the fire stopped.

The attack nevertheless went forward without delay and in good order. By 7.30 A.M. the 1/7th and 1/6th London had reached the final objective of the 140th Brigade, the German support trench from the middle of the Double Crassier to the Béthune—Lens road, and at once began to organize it for defence. A desperate bombing attack was now made on the right flank of the 1/7th London from the south of the Crassier. This for a time threatened to compromise the gains of the 47th Division; but it was repulsed by the efforts of the men of the battalion under Major W. Casson, who, with many others, fell at this time.

North of the Béthune—Lens road, the London Irish Rifles leading, the 141st Brigade reached the Loos Defences trench immediately south of the cemetery,² and halted there, the 1/20th London and 1/19th London now passing through it, according to plan, towards the southern houses of Loos. The 1/20th London advanced rapidly from the Loos Defences trench, and within twenty minutes had occupied the enclosure called the "Garden City". Thence they moved forward, inclining to the right, up the slope

¹ Half the machine guns of the 47th Division were brigaded and dug in along the ridge near North Maroc to support the advance by overhead fire. Two mountain guns, for which little ammunition was available, were specially detailed to knock out the enemy machine guns located at the ends of the Double Crassier.

² This was found to be unfinished and only two and a half feet deep, but strongly wired and the wire uncut. Luckily it was not occupied by the enemy.

towards Chalk Pit Copse and the Chalk Pit. The heavy 25 Sept. wire encountered here was uncut, so the position could not be rushed; but eventually, after hand-grenades had been employed, the pit, with two field guns in it, was captured. The northern end of the copse was also entered, but a trench at its southern end astride the Béthune—Lens road was stubbornly held by its garrison, a company of the *26th Regiment* with two machine guns.¹ Owing to a shortage of bombs, the capture of this post was postponed,² and a line close up to it consolidated. At 9.30 A.M., the 1/20th London, which was reinforced by a company and the machine guns of the 1/17th London,³ was able to report that it was firmly established in the Chalk Pit, had occupied all its objectives, except the southern part of the copse, and, as

¹ Chalk Pit Copse, *Stützpunkt* 69, on the 69 contour, was one of the Lens defences guarding the Béthune—Lens road. On the 25th September, the work was occupied by *No. 4 Company, 26th Regiment*, whose sector lay to the south of the *22nd Reserve Regiment*, and which sent what help it could. An extract from the diary states :—“ At 6 A.M. the bombardment increased, but visibility was good. Shortly afterwards, however, smoke and gas clouds rolled up to us across the valley, and were so thick that one could scarcely see for five yards ahead. Suddenly, about 7 A.M., some men appeared on the ridge across the valley, along which lay our front position, followed by dense skirmishing lines. They came down the hill towards Loos, and we thought they were our own infantry retiring, as they appeared to be waving at us with a yellow flag on a long pole. [This was the 47th Divisional signal to the artillery.] Some of our own troops did pass through us, quite yellow all over with the gas fumes. The lines came past the cemetery, and then turned towards us. During the moments when the cloud and mist lifted, great masses of troops were now visible all along the front, the leading lines running, and those behind following at a walk; so many were there that it looked like a great trek (*Völkerwanderung*). Those immediately in front of our position were not, however, clearly seen till within a hundred yards of our entanglement, and from their headdress we realized that the British were upon us. Line after line now rapidly approached in short rushes, whilst to our right we could see more masses pouring into Loos village. We opened fire, and many fell in front of the wire. The lines, up till now almost unopposed, halted and took cover, some in the copse close by, from which they attacked us with hand-grenades without success, whilst others rushed up a communication trench with fixed bayonets into the northern part of the copse. These were checked, and a captured Belgian gun in a house behind the copse was used with great effect. The enemy made no further progress, and soon after midday we were reinforced by a detachment of the *27th Regiment*, who tried to press the British out of the northern part of the copse, but were repulsed with hand-grenades, losing considerably.”

² It was not captured until the 27th.

³ The remainder of the 1/17th London—replaced in the original British front line by the 1/23rd London, 142nd Brigade, from the divisional reserve—also went up in the early part of the morning to a German communication trench between the 1/18th and 1/20th London. Subsequently the greater part of the battalion was with the 1/20th, holding the line west of the Loos Crassier and maintaining touch with the 140th Brigade on the right.

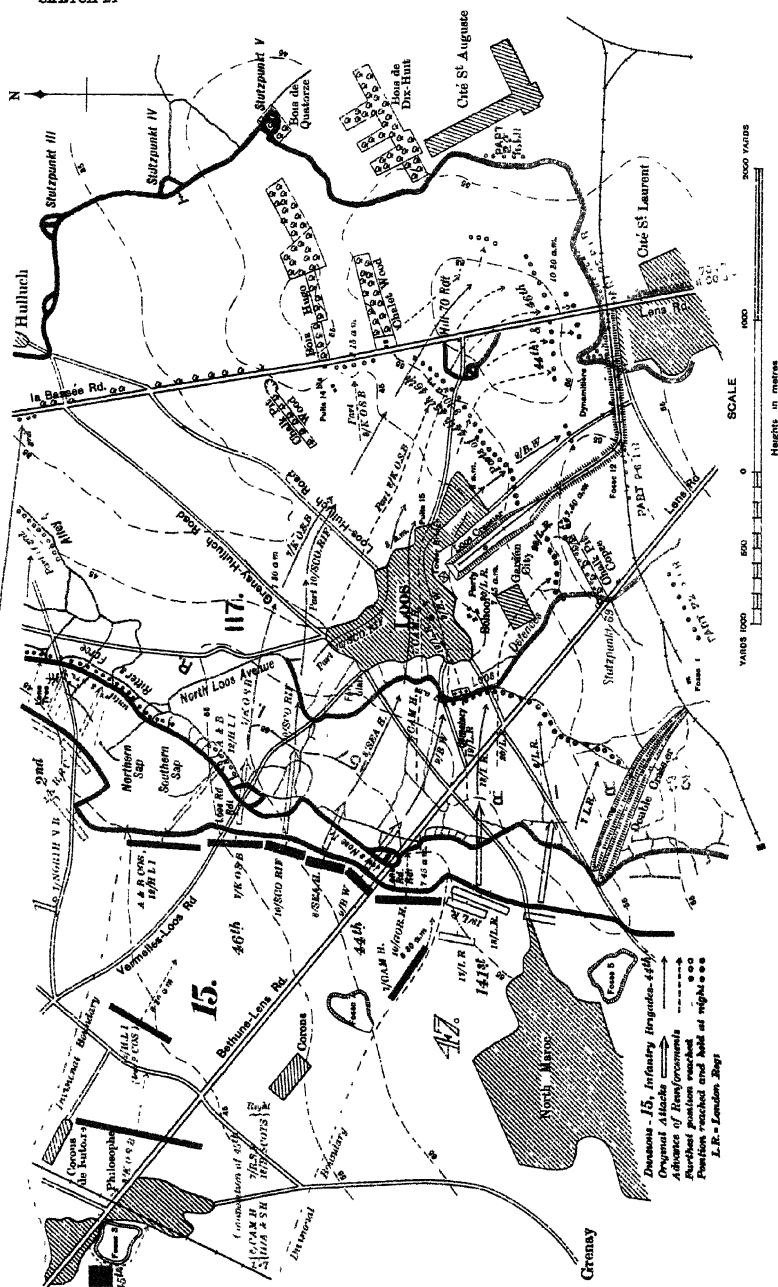
25 Sept. arranged, had subsequently placed a platoon astride the Loos Crassier, where it had arrived by 7.45 A.M.

The 1/19th London, on the left, with C and D companies in front, B in support, and A carrying picks and shovels, had been less fortunate. Its objectives, according to the 141st Brigade operation orders already quoted, were "Mine buildings (at the northern end of the Crassier, "known to the 47th Division as the 'Grand Stand'), and "Crassier—Puits 15", the last named locality being the right of the 15th Division.¹ Immediately after leaving its trench, Lieut.-Colonel Collison-Morley, the second-in-command, the adjutant, and other officers fell, the battalion being badly enfiladed by two machine guns on the left. The right, C, company, duly reached the northern end of the Crassier, and took possession of the buildings, after pulling down the heavy wire netting, strongly secured to iron uprights, that surrounded them and the Crassier. It then pushed on—the right of the 15th Division having by this time got ahead—up the slope south-east of the Crassier, to a terrace where the gentle rise in front provided a clear field of fire for perhaps two hundred yards; but it did not go as far as the top of the ridge. After establishing communication with the 1/20th London, the right company of the 1/19th settled down. The left company in making for Puits 15 had to pass through Loos village, and with the two other companies following it, became mixed up with the units of the 15th Division. These three companies of the 1/19th London in the end became separated and broken up, some parts of them being assembled later in the village,

¹ This does not agree with the IV. Corps and 47th Division orders, both of which gave the Crassier as the left objective of the division. The corps orders gave Loos village (less certain outlying blocks) to the 15th Division, without precisely defining its right; the 47th Division orders mentioned that the 15th Division was timed to be at Puits 15 at 1.15 after zero. There is no mention in the 141st Brigade orders of the 1/20th London placing a platoon astride the Crassier, as stated in the text, but the attack of the 47th Division having been rehearsed, the 1/19th and 1/20th London had no doubt whatever where they were to go. Some reports assume that it was the 1/19th London which should have been astride the Crassier, but the orders of the 1/20th London are quite clear and end with the words, "one platoon to be detailed to move to Loos Crassier via "G. 36. c. 5.5 [centre of the left side of the Crassier] and get astride the "railway line [running the length of the Crassier]". The orders of the 1/19th London are lost, but the commander of the right company reports that his orders were to go to the mine buildings at the western end of the Crassier. The left company no doubt advanced between it and Puits 15, and to do so had to pass through the southern and eastern edges of Loos. Thus it was bound to come into collision with the 15th Division, which was not represented at the rehearsal.

LOOS,

ATTACK OF 15TH DIVISION, ZERO-NOON 23TH SEPTEMBER.



whilst others joined up with the 15th Division, continued 25 Sept. on, and took part in the fighting on Hill 70. Thus of the 47th Division there were on the Crassier and north of it only a platoon of the 1/20th London, and a company of the 1/19th, later reinforced on the left—at the suggestion of the commanding officer of the 1/20th—by a company of the brigade reserve, the 1/17th London.

In its attack, the 47th Division lost over 1,200 of all ranks killed, wounded and missing, the 1/19th London suffering the most heavily, the large number of officer casualties which occurred in No Man's Land being the principal cause of the dislocation of this battalion¹; but by 10 A.M., with its supports holding a German trench from the centre of the Double Crassier to Loos cemetery,² the division was ready to meet any counter-attack that the Germans might deliver from Lens west of the Loos Crassier. Unfortunately, as we shall see, an enemy movement of this nature was to develop against Hill 70, east, not west, of the Crassier; and the absence of the greater part of the 1/19th London from the left wing of the 47th Division, and the failure to provide for the extension of the defensive flank, or to arrange in some other way for the protection of the right of the 15th Division in its advance beyond Loos, were to have a serious effect on the fortunes of that division.

15TH DIVISION

LOOS VILLAGE AND HILL 70

The 15th Division (Major-General F. W. N. McCracken)³ Map 10. was to assault on a frontage of some fifteen hundred yards Sketch 21.

¹ The total casualties of the 47th Division for the whole day (25th September) were 60 officers and 1,352 other ranks killed, wounded and missing, but the majority of these were incurred in the first hours of the battle, *i.e.* before 10 A.M. These casualties chiefly occurred in the assaulting battalions:—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
1/6th London . . .	7	274
1/7th „ . . .	14	250
1/18th „ . . .	9	235
1/19th „ . . .	14	372
1/20th „ . . .	9	162

² Later the 1/23rd London was sent up by the G.O.C. 141st Brigade to extend the left of the 1/18th London, in the Loos Defences trench, as far as the Vermelles—Loos road.

³ It should be noted that the 15th Division had Lewis guns (nominally 12, but actually only 4 per battalion) in lieu of machine guns, the supply of the latter having run short before the division embarked.

25 Sept. astride the Béthune—Lens and the Vermelles—Loos roads.¹

The two leading brigades, the 44th (Br.-General M. G. Wilkinson) and 46th (Br.-General T. G. Matheson), were to capture the Lens Road and Loos Road Redoubts,² in the front defences, in the first rush, and then to advance eastwards down into the valley towards Loos. The Germans attached considerable importance to this village, for, although in a hollow, it formed an outpost to the commanding position of Hill 70. A special line of defence, known as the "Loos Defences", had been constructed in front of its western edge, consisting of a continuous trench, with occasional concrete machine-gun emplacements and "strong points", such as that known as "Fort Glatz", which blocked the entrance of the Vermelles road to the village. After capturing these defences and the village itself, the two leading brigades were to press on up the slope beyond it to Hill 70; their right on Hill 70 Redoubt, a work on the north-western side near the summit of the hill, and their left on the standards and sheds of Puits 14 bis, twelve hundred yards north-east of Loos on the Lens—La Bassée road. The first brigade to reach the Lens road, which passes over the summit of Hill 70 immediately east of the redoubt, was to leave behind sufficient force, probably a battalion,³ to consolidate the hill for defence, whilst the remainder of the two assaulting brigades moved on towards Cité St. Auguste, a thousand yards further east down the reverse slope of the hill. Their left was to follow a track between Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo, strips of copse extending eastwards from the Lens—La Bassée road.

In this sector of the front the German second position, the next objective, formed a pocket, like the "curtain" and flanks of a bastioned front. Skirting the western edge of the northern suburbs of Lens, Cité St. Laurent, it turned sharp to the eastwards for twelve hundred yards across the Lens—La Bassée road to Cité St. Auguste, that lay on the reverse slope of Hill 70. Here, still keeping along the reverse side of the slope, it turned northwards again, in a

¹ The assaulting brigades were faced by approximately two companies (400 men) of the *157th Regiment* holding the German front defences. The other two companies of its front line battalion faced the 1st Division further north.

² These—and the other redoubts, "strong points" and *Stützpunkte*—were not isolated works, but portions of the front-line system, prepared and wired for all-round defence, so that they could be held even if the trenches on either side were captured.

³ This point is further dealt with below.

well-sited line that provided plenty of flanking fire, past the eastern ends of Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo. Near Hulluch the line formed another big flank by turning westward and then round that village. The movement of the 15th Division, after crossing the crest of Hill 70 might therefore be enfiladed both from right and left during the whole of its further progress towards Cité St. Auguste. No provision was made for dealing with the northern defences of Lens : it was hoped that the Germans would be kept on the run, and fairly certain that they would not hold their second position in any strength. Passing through Cité St. Auguste, the advance was to be continued without delay to Loison and Annay, a mile and a half beyond.

The leading battalions of the 44th Brigade, the 9/Black Watch (Lieut.-Colonel T. O. Lloyd) and 8/Seaforth Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel N. A. Thomson),¹ and of the 46th Brigade, the 10/Scottish Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel A. V. Ussher) and 7/K.O.S.B. (Lieut.-Colonel G. de W. Verner) with two companies of the 12/Highland L.I. (Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Purvis),² began to clamber over the parapet at 6.30 A.M., the successive lines following each other at fifty paces distance.³ At first the left of the

¹ The 7/Cameron Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel J. W. Sandilands) was in second line and the 10/Gordon Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel H. R. Wallace) in reserve.

² The rest of the 12/H.L.I. and the 8/K.O.S.B. (Lieut.-Colonel T. B. Sellar) were in reserve.

³ Some paragraphs from the divisional orders will give a good idea of the general arrangements. Of the divisional engineers the 73rd and 91st Field Companies were attached to and accompanied the assaulting brigades.

"Assaulting Columns :

"a) The assault will be delivered by four columns, two from each of the leading brigades. Each column will consist of one battalion (with "machine guns), one section R.E., and one platoon of 9/Gordon Highlanders [this battalion, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel W. A. Scott, had "just been converted into the Pioneer battalion of the division] and will "be formed up in depth on a front of two platoons.

"b) The task of the assaulting columns will be to move straight forward "to their ultimate objective.

"Parties for cutting wire, blocking side trenches and bombing down "communication trenches, will be told off from the leading two companies.

"Assaulting columns will *not* be entrusted with the tasks of occupying "and consolidating positions won, or of digging communications back to "our own trenches ; these tasks will be allotted to parties told off from "the brigade reserves [who were to work under the direction of the C.R.E., "Lieut.-Colonel G. S. Cartwright]. The assaulting columns must push on. "c) The fourth company in each column will carry a proportion of picks "and shovels ; the R.E. section will carry explosives for hasty demolitions ; "the platoon of the 9/Gordon Highlanders will carry six sandbags per man "and tools."

By this period many battalions had been so trained that, in addition

25 Sept. advance hung back slightly, many of the 46th Brigade being dazed by the gas, which here clung to the British trenches, whilst others lingered in order to cross the front trench at places clear of gas cylinders. Unfortunately the old pattern smoke helmet, though proof against gas, was also nearly air-proof, and, when the front was down, it had to be frequently raised for breathing purposes. Many men, therefore, kept it up or threw the helmet off altogether after the first few minutes, and suffered accordingly. The majority, however, moved against the enemy at the sound of the pipes of Piper D. Laidlaw, 7/K.O.S.B., who marched up and down on the parapet.¹ In the 15th Division sector, as on the front of the 9th Division further north—where, according to plan, the assault was also to be carried out whether gas was liberated or not—Russian saps had been dug forward, and their heads joined, so that less than two hundred yards separated the British front trenches from those of the Germans. Few casualties were suffered in the first forty yards, judging by the position of the rows of dead on the field; nevertheless, the cloud of gas and smoke did not entirely hide the advancing lines, and, before the German wire was reached, two machine guns in each of the German road redoubts swept the front. Although the crews had time to traverse only twice up and down the line before they were dealt with by bombs, they created large gaps in the ranks of the two leading battalions of both brigades. The heavy casualties of the first few minutes of the assault were increased by rifle fire and

to ordinary infantry work, each platoon in each company had its four sections specially instructed, one for wiring, one for bombing, one as machine gunners, and one for mining. In other battalions a greater proportion of men had been trained in bombing, and a large party of bombers was kept with battalion headquarters. In other cases again the bombers were brigaded. The 15th Division, for instance, had a "Brigade Grenadier Squad" of 5 officers and 176 other ranks.

The service hand-grenades at the time of Loos were mainly (364,005, two-thirds of the whole) the heavy and unpopular spherical "Ball" grenade, the balance being made up by another stop-gap, the "Pitcher". Locally-made grenades were preferred. All suffered from ignition difficulties, particularly in wet weather. The Mills grenade had just begun to arrive; there were 11,484 available, and they were mainly issued to the battalions of the Guards Division. The "Pippin" rifle grenade, made locally, was also used at Loos. Rifle grenades are fired from rifles, by means of an attached rod and a special cartridge. The pattern in question depended for its action on the "set-back", on discharge, of a tin cover, in the centre of which was a spike designed to strike the ignition-cap. A slight accidental blow, or the dropping of the grenade, would equally well cause it to explode.

¹ He continued playing his pipes until wounded, and was awarded the V.C.

spasmodic artillery fire, now opened by the German field batteries in and north of Loos. Of the 9/Black Watch, 8 officers and over 150 other ranks fell in No Man's Land; and the 8/Seaforth, though not suffering quite so heavily, lost its commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel Thomson, wounded, and the second-in-command. So, too, in the 46th Brigade, both the 10/Scottish Rifles and 7/K.O.S.B. had severe casualties, especially in officers, before they had penetrated the German first line of defence. Fortunately the wire in front of it had been well cut, and the men were able to get through at once into the trench. The small German garrison was either captured in the deep dug-outs of the front line, or retired hurriedly down the hill towards Lens, disappearing into the smoke cloud that had drifted down the valley from the south and enveloped Loos village. The assaulting battalions did not delay. Their lines of companies, owing to the thick smoke, had by now become intermingled, but they advanced down towards the Loos Defences in good order and with determination.

The village was still a thousand yards away, but the smoke was rapidly dispersing and before the assaulting troops came to the Grenay—Hulluch road that crossed their front they could dimly see through the mist the dark outline of the twin Pylon Towers, given as point of direction for the right of the division. By 7 A.M. the Loos Defences had been reached, and were found unoccupied, but the thick wire entanglement in front had only been partially cut, so that here and there the advance was temporarily checked. This delay gave opportunity for two German machine guns, one in a house east of the cemetery, and another in Fort Glatz, to inflict a number of casualties before the bombing parties could find and silence them. The rifle fire from the houses was slight, and mostly wild and high. On the right, the leading battalions of the 44th Brigade had pressed into the village, followed by the 7/Cameron's, in support, which added to the weight of the assault. The bombers who led the way found a scene of confusion in the village. The Germans had not expected their front line to fall so easily, and were completely unprepared to meet this sudden invasion. Many of them remained in hiding in the cellars, the search for them continuing throughout the day.¹ Other Germans,

¹ As late as 28th September search parties discovered and took prisoner small parties of Germans in the cellars. It was not until this systematic

25 Sept. however, put up a stubborn resistance among the ruined houses, but they were quickly overcome by the gallant work of the bombing parties, and by the very weight of the assault in the narrow streets, bayonets being freely used. Others, again, did not wait to meet the assailants: the smoke and the faint smell of gas in the air had set them on the run, and the onrush of several hundred Highlanders made them increase their speed as they fled from the village, leaving their equipment behind in their haste. Some went towards Cité St. Laurent, others along the track that leads eastwards up to the redoubt near the top of Hill 70.

The advance of the Black Watch and the Camerons through the southern part of the village was irresistible: a party of Germans attempted to barricade and hold the small square near the church, but the tide of the attack swept over their bodies, and then passed by the foot of the Pylon Towers, picking up some of the 1/19th London of the 47th Division, to the eastern exits of the village. The Seaforths had been equally successful in clearing the northern part, and soon after 8 A.M. Loos was entirely in British possession.

Further north the advance of the 46th Brigade had not been so full of incident. By 7.30 A.M. it had reached the line of trenches that lie immediately east of the Grenay—Hulluch road, and thence had advanced across the open valley north of Loos. The 10/Scottish Rifles, on the right, was swept in enfilade by machine-gun and rifle fire from the northern houses of Loos until the attack of the 44th Brigade inside the village had developed. Although this fire then gradually ceased, it had the usual effect of drawing some of the men from their proper line of advance, and, moving through the northern houses of the village, the flank of the Scottish Rifles became involved in the fighting there and intermingled with the Seaforths.

The 7/K.O.S.B., the left of the 46th Brigade, after suffering heavily in crossing No Man's Land had an uneventful progress. Supported by a company of the 12/Highland Light Infantry,¹ the battalion now went

search was made that six field guns were also discovered, dug in and partly buried in the débris; only two guns were noticed by the assaulting troops on the 25th as they passed through the village. German authorities state that there were twelve field guns in Loos, and that all were lost. Perhaps the other six were those captured by the 46th Brigade. See below.

¹ The 12/H.L.I. (less two companies), under Lieut.-Colonel Purvis, advanced in support, with one company behind the 10/Scottish Rifles and

steadily forward, unopposed, across the open valley, finding 25 Sept. six guns abandoned by the enemy, and hindered only by the chalky mud that balled round their boots and added unpleasantly to the weight they were already carrying. The iron standards of Puits 14 bis on the rising ground in front guided the left of their advance towards the Lens—La Bassée road and Bois Hugo. From time to time patrols were sent out to the north to gain touch with the right of the 1st Division, as it was difficult to see far through the smoke and low mist that hung above the sodden ground in the valley; but in the desolate tract of land for a thousand yards and more north of Puits 14 bis neither friend nor foe could be discovered. The K.O.S.B., therefore, pushed on, inclining to the right in order to conform to the general movement of the right of the division. By 9.15 A.M. they had reached the Lens road.¹

In the meantime the reserve battalions of both brigades had moved forward into the front line. The 10/Gordons of the 44th Brigade, eager for the fray, had pressed through Loos on the heels of the assaulting battalions, and caught them up before they had reached the eastern exits. The 8/K.O.S.B.,² reserve battalion of the 46th Brigade, had orders to close up on the heels of the 12/H.L.I., and keep the advance moving, and was sent forward in independent company columns. Losing touch with the battalion, one company joined up with the Scottish Rifles at the eastern exit of Loos, but the others continued to go forward. These companies were moved up on the outer flank of the 7/K.O.S.B., south of Puits 14 bis, to provide protection for the left of the division which, it was realized, had lost direction.

The fighting in Loos had drawn together the mass of the 44th and 46th Brigades, so that soon after 8 A.M. on a narrow front of about six hundred yards near the eastern exits of the village there was a great gathering of Scottish units. As they streamed out thoroughly intermingled, and began the ascent of Hill 70 in a somewhat leisurely manner,

one behind the 7/K.O.S.B. The other two companies, under Captain P. W. Torrance, had been detailed to bomb up the German trench between Southern and Northern Saps, clear it and hold it. See below.

¹ Message from 7/K.O.S.B. at 9.15 A.M.: "Have reached 300 yards south of Puits 14 bis. Going strong. Have halted for another blow as our artillery are firing a bit short. Shall push on again immediately. Major T. Glenny."

² Two platoons from two different companies had been retained to dig communication trenches across the original No Man's Land, joining up the British and German front trenches.

25 Sept. they had, in the words of a battalion diarist, "the appearance of a bank holiday crowd". For the moment there was a lull in the noise of battle, and their advance appeared to be unopposed. The situation seemed so favourable that the 15th Division at 9.30 A.M. ordered forward the 74th Field Company R.E. and the 180th Tunnelling Company R.E. to bridge trenches and prepare tracks for the field artillery to go forward. Battalions and companies might now have been reorganized, but, since the loss of many of their commanders was as yet unknown to the junior ranks, no one took the initiative in this respect, and the men tried to sort themselves out as best they could on the move. They were far from being at full strength: many had become casualties, some had got lost or had stayed behind in the maze of trenches, whilst a number remained in Loos searching the ruins and cellars, so that in all only about fifteen hundred men actually faced the slope of Hill 70.

The Pylon Towers, well known to all ranks, now lay behind, and the men were in unfamiliar surroundings. The smoke that had made the atmosphere of Loos resemble a London fog had cleared, but their vision was bounded by the bare slope of Hill 70 in front of them, with its long bleak crest-line some five hundred yards away outlined against the dull sky. There was no definite landmark on which to move, even the trees that in continental fashion bordered the Lens—La Bassée road came to an end near Hill 70,¹ and the mass of men, now in considerable disorder, advanced straight up the slope.

Hill 70, however, lies south-east from the village, whereas the direction of the advance that had been ordered was due east, aslant the slope. A factor that perhaps influenced this change of direction was an ambiguity in the brigade and battalion orders of the 15th Division as to the movements of the 47th Division operating on its right. It was not made sufficiently clear that the 47th Division was to halt after reaching the Loos Crassier and the Double Crassier. The 44th Brigade orders mentioned that the 47th Division was to form a defensive flank, and gave its objectives, but did not state that these were its final objectives; whilst the 46th Brigade orders merely said that the 47th Division "will be attacking on the right of the 15th Division". In any case, the prevalent belief

¹ A few panorama sketches compiled from the map, aeroplane photographs and observation from high points, had been prepared in the 15th Division; but there is no record of their use.

of the regimental officers of the assaulting brigades was 25 Sept. that, in their advance to Cité St. Auguste and beyond, their right flank would be protected throughout by a simultaneous advance of the 47th Division through the northern outskirts of Lens. Consequently the leading company of the 9/Black Watch, the right battalion of the 15th Division, as it came out of Loos, inclined to the right along the east side of Loos Crassier in order to gain touch with the 47th Division. It expected to find troops north of the Crassier and across its southern end; but, as we have seen, of the battalion (the 1/19th London) detailed for the purpose, three companies had drifted into Loos village, and the fourth was still at the northern end of the Crassier. Its absence now had fatal consequences; for on arriving near the southern end and seeing no sign of British troops there,¹ the right company of the Black Watch, or rather the survivors of it, halted on the crest, some two hundred yards from Fosse 12. A few men were then sent forward to take up a position facing south along the railway embankment that lies between the Fosse and the Dynamitière, a large building used as a store for mine explosives and now converted into a strong work in front of the German second line. This action, though only intended to form a temporary defence for the right flank of the division until the arrival of the 47th, may or may not have contributed to the change of direction of the attack. In any case the fifteen hundred men of the 44th and 46th Brigades, now moving up the slope of Hill 70 between Loos Crassier and Puits 14 bis, could see Germans running away and disappearing over the south side of the hill—a sight too much no doubt for Highland blood—and began to drift southwards.

Instead of advancing with its right on Hill 70 Redoubt, the 44th Brigade moved with its left on that work, and its right along the Loos Crassier. The 46th Brigade conformed, and, instead of having its left on the Loos—Cité St. Auguste track, swung round astride the Lens—La Bassée road, its right, the Scottish Rifles, moving on Hill 70 Redoubt, and its left hanging back near the Bois Hugo.

At this time the small party of Germans that had

¹ The platoon of the 1/20th London was across the centre of the Crassier, and the right company of the 1/19th London was near the northern end (see page 191). The latter, it may be added, was withdrawn to reinforce the 1/20th London, when it was found that the 15th Division had extended to the southern end of the Crassier.

25 Sept. retired from Loos village into Hill 70 Redoubt, seeing that the strength of the advance out of Loos threatened their isolated position, decided to rejoin their comrades in Cité St. Laurent; and as they ran across the open southwards towards Cité St. Laurent, their figures stood out clearly against the sky-line, and could be seen by many of the 44th Brigade, on the right, as the latter neared the top of the hill. The sight was greeted by a rousing cheer, and all who noticed it went forward with renewed vigour in pursuit. The redoubt was captured, but the direction of the whole advance was given a further impetus towards the south.

Almost at the same time, on the left, as the 46th Brigade was swinging round south of Bois Hugo, word was passed along from the right that the 44th Brigade had captured a village, meaning Loos. But, looking ahead, a number of men could be seen moving into Cité St. Auguste, and these were taken to be British troops in the act of capturing that village. They were, however, German troops manhandling some guns back from a forward position, and as the left of the 46th Brigade ran forward, cheering, towards Cité St. Auguste, heavy machine-gun and rifle fire was opened on it from the houses and from the second position trench in front of them.

In this manner, pressing on with but the one thought of keeping the Germans on the run, fifteen hundred men of the two brigades crossed the flat summit of the hill, and began to move down the glaxis slope that falls away to the south and east. The swing to southwards was now very pronounced, and, although a number of the left of the 46th Brigade went on eastwards to Cité St. Auguste, the majority of the leading troops of both brigades, pivoting on the right of the 44th Brigade at the head of the Loos Crassier, headed for Cité St. Laurent, six hundred yards away.

The general line was now convex. The changed direction had carried it into the pocket formed by the German second position between Cité St. Laurent, Cité St. Auguste and Bois Hugo. From this a heavy crossfire¹ was now

¹ At Cité St. Laurent and the Dynamitière the position was held by the remnants of the Loos garrison, reinforced by a detachment sent to their help from the supporting battalion of the 22nd Reserve Regiment in Cité St. Pierre; whilst at Cité St. Auguste the company of the reserve battalion of the same regiment billeted in that village (the other three companies of this battalion were in rest billets at Pont à Vendin) had moved into position in the trench along its western edge.

suddenly opened. Many of the officers,¹ realizing the change of direction, and appreciating the danger of continuing the advance over this open stretch of ground in the disorganized state of their units, rallied the men near them, and were able to hold back some three or four hundred, and re-form them behind the crest-line of Hill 70. 25 Sept.

Divisional operation orders had directed that the first brigade to gain Hill 70 was to detail a "sufficient force to consolidate and hold it until troops from the divisional reserve can be pushed up to take it over", whilst the remainder pushed on to the German trenches in front of Cité St. Auguste. The 44th Brigade was the first to reach the hill; its orders provided for the case by saying that the sufficient force would be "probably one battalion", and, as it was impossible beforehand to detail any particular battalion or force, added, "the senior commanding officer on the spot will issue the necessary order for consolidating that position against possible attack from direction of Lens".

Lieut.-Colonel T. O. Lloyd, 9/Black Watch, was the senior of the 44th Brigade commanding officers, but, having found that there was a gap between his right and the 47th Division, he had gone to that flank to remedy matters, and was not on the hill. This left Lieut.-Colonel Sandilands, 7/Cameron Highlanders, the senior, and he, assisted by Lieut.-Colonel Wallace, 10/Gordon Highlanders, at once set to work to consolidate the position with what troops he had. In view of the uncertainty as regards the position of the 47th Division on the right, it seemed a great risk to attempt any further advance towards Cité St. Auguste without reinforcements; moreover the advance of the 1st Division on the left showed no signs of developing, although the three companies of the 8/K.O.S.B. under Lieut.-Colonel Sellar, continued to cover the flank towards Bois Hugo. Lieut.-Colonels Sandilands and Wallace, who were aware that the brigade commander doubted the wisdom of going beyond Hill 70, did all they could therefore

¹ On reaching the top of the hill a number of officers of the 44th Brigade, unaware of the change of direction, believed the houses they could see ahead of them to be those of Cité St. Auguste, and that they were still advancing eastwards. Reports and sketches sent back to brigade and divisional headquarters during the morning showed that this erroneous impression was fairly prevalent. As a matter of fact, the view east from Hill 70 and the view south are extraordinarily similar; St. Laurent and St. Auguste are nearly equidistant from the summit, and each was made up of a tall iron wheel-house standard, one large upstanding two-storeyed house, and a mass of small houses.

25 Sept. to stop any further advance, and to get back the men who in their eagerness had pressed on over the hill. But the volunteers sent for the latter purpose did not return and the advance went on.¹

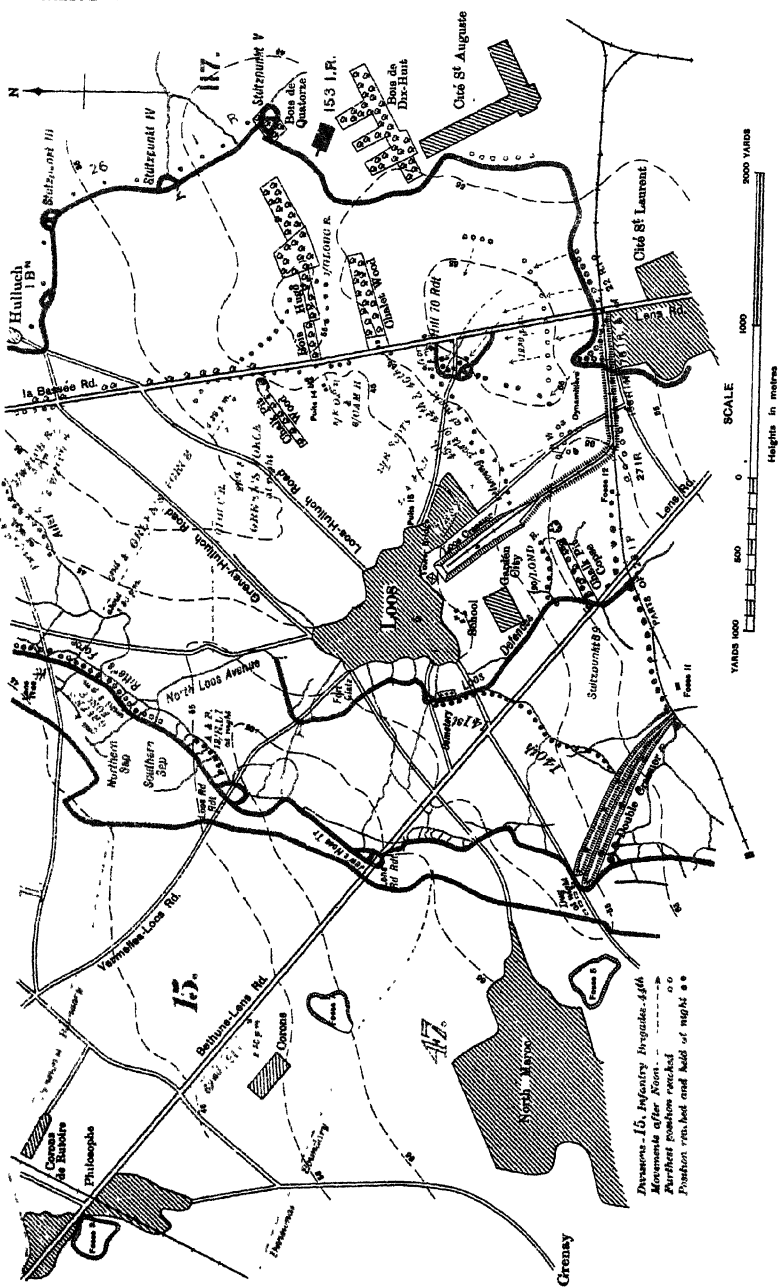
Some eight or nine hundred Scots passed over the hill and went on down the bare and open slope, the majority southwards towards the houses of Cité St. Laurent, where they could now see the Germans moving about and hurriedly getting into position. When within three hundred yards of the German second position, which there ran east and west immediately in front of the houses, enfilade machine-gun fire was opened on them from the *Dynamitière* salient, and this, added to the increasing rifle fire in front, effectually checked them. They stopped and lay down, but the slope was as bare as a board, and, rather than lie still and be shot, they resorted to short individual rushes which eventually, about 10.30 A.M., brought their ever-diminishing numbers to within some eighty yards of the German front trench. Now they could see that a broad and high wire entanglement, hidden by long grass and apparently intact, lay between them and the Germans. They could go neither forward nor backward, and the parties in rear, caught on the open slope, were unable to close up to reinforce the front line: so all began to scrape up what cover they could in the hard, chalky soil with their entrenching tools. Nevertheless a number of desperate efforts were made during the morning by small parties to break into the enemy front line: in places a few men got through gaps in the wire, but they were either killed or taken prisoner in the German position.

In the meantime the change of direction which had destroyed the initial cohesion and weight of the attack, and exposed its left flank, made any continuation of the advance eastwards more than ever out of the question. The few hundred men who had been held back under the shelter of Hill 70—including those of the 73rd Field Company R.E., in which five of the six officers had fallen—reinforced by the 7/Royal Scots Fusiliers² (Lieut.-Colonel C. M. S. Henning) of the 45th Brigade, had been preparing

¹ It was impossible to communicate, except by runners, with brigade headquarters in Quality Street, in the Corons of Fosse 7, where, by divisional order, they remained until the afternoon. Then they were moved forward to Tower Bridge, but here they were out of touch both of the battalions and the division, and were eventually moved back again.

² This battalion, after digging communication trenches, had moved forward on the initiative of its commanding officer.

ATTACK OF 15TH DIVISION, FROM NORTH ONWARDS. 25 TH SEPTEMBER



Ordinance Survey, 1938

the hill for defence. A trench was dug along a natural bank or terrace that ran immediately below the crest. Its right rested on the southern end of the Loos Crassier, the centre was at Hill 70 Redoubt, and the left on the Lens—La Bassée road near Chalet Wood. 25 Sept.

To assist the men who had gone southwards towards Cité St. Laurent and were held up there, messages were sent from the hill asking for artillery support against the Dynamitière and the adjoining German position. The various reports sent back did not, however, enable divisional and corps headquarters to form a correct appreciation of the situation that had arisen on the hill. It was thought that the 44th and 46th Brigades were stopped east of Hill 70 in front of Cité St. Auguste, and the change of direction southwards on to Cité St. Laurent was not realized. At 10.50 A.M. General Rawlinson, the IV. Corps commander, sent word to General McCracken directing him to continue the advance of the 15th Division at once through Cité St. Auguste with the 45th Brigade, which had been moved up from divisional reserve to the original British front trenches for the purpose. At the same time, he ordered all the available heavy artillery, which had by this time lifted beyond the German second position, to bring back its fire for half an hour on to Cité St. Auguste and the German defences in front and north of that village, in order to prepare the assault. In this way the troops in front of Cité St. Laurent were left unsupported, and the fateful morning hours passed before their need for artillery assistance was understood at corps headquarters.

At first the German trench in front of Cité St. Laurent had, as we have seen, been weakly held; but by 11.30 A.M. reinforcements had arrived and a determined attempt was made to envelop the British troops lying out on the bare slope beyond, force them away from Loos and surround them in the pocket of the second position between St. Laurent and St. Auguste.¹ A first effort to achieve this by

¹ The change of direction of the attack to southward against Cité St. Laurent gave the Germans a false idea of the British intentions. A message sent back from St. Laurent to 7th Divisional headquarters in Lens, said that the English had come through Loos and were wheeling round southwards to attack St. Laurent and St. Edouard ("Regt. No. 26", ii. p. 298). The battalion (III.) of the 178th Regiment in IV. Corps reserve in Lens was at once (9.30 A.M.) ordered up to Cité St. Laurent to reinforce the second line there. Shortly afterwards came a further report that the English were continuing to advance, had occupied Hill 70 and were moving on Lens. ("Res. Regt. No. 106", pp. 32-3). General Lucius, commanding in Lens, considered the situation extremely critical. The rising ground on which

25 Sept. an attack launched across the railway embankment west of the Dynamitière was, however, successfully held up by what remained of the two left companies of the 9/Black Watch, no more than twenty men, in position south-east of the southern end of the Loos Crassier. Their resistance prevented the whole of the new line behind the crest from being enfiladed. About midday, with the arrival in the St. Laurent position of more enemy reinforcements¹ from Lens, the machine-gun and rifle fire intensified, and the thin British line opposite St. Laurent, running short of ammunition, began to waver. About 1 P.M. some of the men lying out in front of the Dynamitière began to crawl back in a vain effort to reach the crest of Hill 70 again. This sign of weakness had an immediate effect on the Germans, parties of whom moved out through gaps in the wire entanglement and charged forward. Their cheers inspired all the German troops now in the second position on either side of the Lens—La Bassée road, a great number of whom left the trenches and rushed wildly forward on a broad front towards the summit of Hill 70. The few unwounded British remaining before St. Laurent could offer little resistance from the small scrapings of cover they had dug: some ran back, but the majority of them were either killed or taken prisoner.² On reaching the summit of the hill the Germans were held up by the

lay St. Laurent and St. Edouard overlooked the town and all its approaches, so much so that their occupation by the British would threaten the communications of all the front units of the *IV. Corps*. He decided that the advance must be stopped at all costs, and at 10.45 A.M. ordered all available troops in Lens: one battalion *106th Reserve Regiment*; half a battalion and infantry pioneer company, *26th Regiment*; one battalion *27th Regiment*; two companies *182nd Regiment*; *Divisional Pioneer Company No. 245*; and one squadron Hussars (divisional cavalry)—to move to the northern exits of Lens and hold the second position between the Lens—Béthune and Lens—La Bassée roads (inclusive). If any part of the position had been already occupied by the enemy it was to be at once re-captured. In Lens itself the bugles sounded the "fall in" and all the office personnel, wounded and sick who could walk, and transport and baggage were assembled to leave the town.

¹ See footnote above.

² Of the estimated eight or nine hundred who had gone on beyond the summit of Hill 70 only fifty were captured unwounded by the Germans. ("Regt. No. 26.")

"Regt. No. 178", in describing the action says:—"To those who took part, this charge up the slope of Hill 70 will be an unforgettable experience, whilst to those who watched it gave a war picture such as will seldom recur. On reaching the summit, Adjutant Lieut. Ryssel was mortally wounded by a shell splinter, shouting, as he lay dying, 'We have it, hurrah!'"

The *26th Regiment*, *106th Reserve Regiment* and *178th Regiment* all claim a share in the recapture of Hill 70 Redoubt.

redoubt and the new British position below the crest of the hill, and also in front of the 9/Black Watch, which continued to hold on astride the Loos—Lens track near the Loos Crassier. After a stubborn encounter the enemy nevertheless succeeded in re-capturing Hill 70 Redoubt. 2/Lieut. F. H. Johnson (73rd Field Company R.E.), who, in the first place had organized the defence of the redoubt, though wounded, led several charges to retake it, but the enemy remained in possession.¹

Soon after midday the rumbling of the French bombardment on the Vimy plateau, south of Lens, that had mingled with the noise of battle on the British front throughout the morning, became intense; and at 12.45 P.M. the French infantry, six hours after the British, delivered its assault against the German front defences between Angres and Arras. The remainder of the German reserves in and south of Lens had to stand to arms ready to meet any developments on the French front, and, for the moment, no more could be spared for Hill 70. Further efforts to dislodge the British from the hill were therefore abandoned. During the afternoon the Germans contented themselves with holding the redoubt—whence they had complete command of the Lens—La Bassée road and ground west of it as far as Puits 14 bis²—and with shelling Loos village, and the Béthune—Lens road.

The reserve of the 15th Division, the 45th Brigade (Br.-General F. E. Wallerston), which, it will be remembered, had been ordered up to the old British front trenches to carry forward the supposed attack on Cité St. Auguste, was not, in the end, employed as a tactical whole. The 7/Scots Fusiliers had at 9 A.M., by order of its commanding officer, followed the 7/Cameron Highlanders (44th Brigade) through Loos on to Hill 70, its presence proving of the greatest value in holding the new line. Shortly afterwards Br.-General Matheson, commanding the 46th Brigade, asked for support for the left of his brigade, formed by the 7/ and 8/K.O.S.B., near Puits 14 bis. This flank was exposed owing to the failure to advance of the 1st Division on its left, and view to the front was blocked by the crest of the northern slope of Hill 70 and the copses on it. First

¹ Lieut. Johnson was awarded the V.C. for his splendid example and cool courage on this occasion. He remained at his post until relieved in the evening. He died of wounds received in action as a major on 26th Nov. 1917.

² Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo blocked the view on the eastern side of the road.

25 Sept. a hundred bombers and a platoon of the 6/Cameron Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel A. F. Douglas-Hamilton) were sent forward, and later the whole battalion. Its right was directed on Puits 14 bis, with orders to place itself under the command of Br.-General Matheson. By his direction, the Camerons formed a defensive flank from the north-west corner of Chalet Wood to Chalk Pit Wood, two companies and the machine-gun section being established east of the Lens—La Bassée road by 12.30 P.M. The two remaining battalions of the 45th Brigade—the 13/Royal Scots and 11/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders—alone were ordered to advance through Loos against Cité St. Auguste. These units, however, did not reach Loos village till after 1 P.M., by which time the Germans had counter-attacked from Cité St. Laurent, and were again in possession of Hill 70 Redoubt. From the redoubt they commanded, as mentioned, the western slope of the hill down into Loos, and this, added to the constant shelling of the village by the German batteries behind both Cité St. Laurent and Cité St. Auguste, made it impracticable, without strong artillery support, to organize a further attack against the summit of Hill 70. The 13/Royal Scots and 11/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders therefore remained in Loos in support, the other two battalions of the 45th Brigade and the units of the 44th and 46th Brigades, intermixed, continuing throughout the afternoon to hold the new position on the hill, from Loos Crassier, along the terrace below Hill 70 Redoubt, to Chalk Pit Wood.

S.A.A. carts and mules with ammunition were sent forward to Loos village, whence the ammunition was manhandled to the front line. The tool carts and the pontoon wagons of the 74th Field Company R.E., laden with picks, shovels, barbed wire and sandbags, were also ordered up to the square in Loos as soon as practicable, as the portable entrenching implement carried by the troops made slow work in the hard chalky soil. The Béthune—Lens road, under constant enemy artillery fire from Lens, soon became littered with shell-shattered vehicles, and there was great difficulty in getting this transport forward to Loos. The tool carts, in fact, only reached there by going across country. It was not until the next night that by the exertions of the engineers of the division assisted by Yeomanry the road was sufficiently cleared to permit of ambulance wagons being brought up.

At 7.45 P.M. General McCracken, the commander of the

15th Division, sent his G.S.O. 2., Major E. G. Wace, to 25 Sept. investigate the situation of his troops. When this officer reached the 44th Brigade headquarters in Loos, Lieut.-Colonel Sandilands had just arrived from Hill 70 to ascertain what he was to do next. It was decided that the two battalions of the 45th Brigade in Loos should relieve the fragments of the 44th Brigade¹ on the hill, and that Lieut.-Colonel H. Maclear (commanding the 13/Royal Scots) should take over command of the position there from Lieut.-Colonel Sandilands, who thereupon left to make the necessary arrangements. His orders were to tell Lieut.-Colonel Maclear to relieve the 44th Brigade, withdraw the Black Watch, Seaforths and Camerons on relief, and leave the 10/Gordon Highlanders until Lieut.-Colonel Maclear released them as no longer wanted.

From the original plan General McCracken had understood that a reinforcement from the general reserve would reach him at 10 A.M., but this accession of strength (the 62nd Brigade), did not arrive in Loos till nightfall (7.30 P.M.), and, in General McCracken's words, "was not in a condition fit "to enter such a fight".² It was then ordered to relieve the remnants of the 46th Brigade holding the line approximately between the Loos—Hill 70 track and Puits 14 bis.³

Thus nightfall found both the 47th and 15th Divisions on a line between the German first and second defensive positions, from the Double Crassier to Chalk Pit Wood, along the western slope of the Cité spur which bounds the Loos valley on the south.

¹ The casualties of the 44th Brigade during the day's fighting reported at the time were :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
9/Black Watch . . .	20 (20)	672 (660)
8/Seaforths . . .	19 (23)	700 (479)
10/Gordons . . .	7	374
7/Camerons . . .	14 (19)	534 (668)

The original figures were thought to include a number of missing, and as the war diaries gave no indication, the "Part II. Battalion Daily Orders "A.F.O. 1810", known to be accurate, were investigated, a somewhat lengthy process. These appear to account for all except a small percentage. The corrected figures thus obtained are given in brackets.

² The reasons for the delay, and for the alleged state of the brigade are given in Chapter XVI.

³ The originally reported casualties of the 46th Brigade were as follows for the fighting on the 25th-26th, but the majority were incurred during the 25th. The corrected figures are in brackets.

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
7/K.O.S.B. . . .	19 (20)	645 (611)
8/	14	379
10/Scottish Rifles . . .	21 (21)	638 (464)
12/H.L.I. . . .	18 (21)	558 (532)

CHAPTER XI

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

25TH SEPTEMBER 1915

THE ATTACK OF THE IV. CORPS (*concluded*)

(Map 9 ; Sketches 22, 23, 24)

1ST DIVISION

CHALK PIT WOOD AND HULLUCH

Map 9. IN making the original plan of the attack in mid-August it was not believed possible for the 15th Division to capture both the German front system and the Loos Defences behind it in one assault. It had therefore been arranged to keep the 1st Division (Major-General A. E. A. Holland) in reserve, and, in the event of Loos holding out, to employ it to attack the village and its defences from the north, in combination with the frontal attack of the 15th Division from the west. The decision to attack after a discharge of gas with all six divisions of the I. and IV. Corps simultaneously had caused this arrangement to be cancelled, and the 1st Division, early in September, took over the fourteen hundred yards of front on the left of the 15th Division, from opposite Northern Sap to the Vermelles—Hulluch road, where its left was in touch with the 7th Division, the right division of the I. Corps. Jumping-off trenches about three hundred yards in advance of the original British line,¹ close up to the crest of the Grenay ridge, were dug; but even then the German trenches in this sector, three to four hundred yards away on the

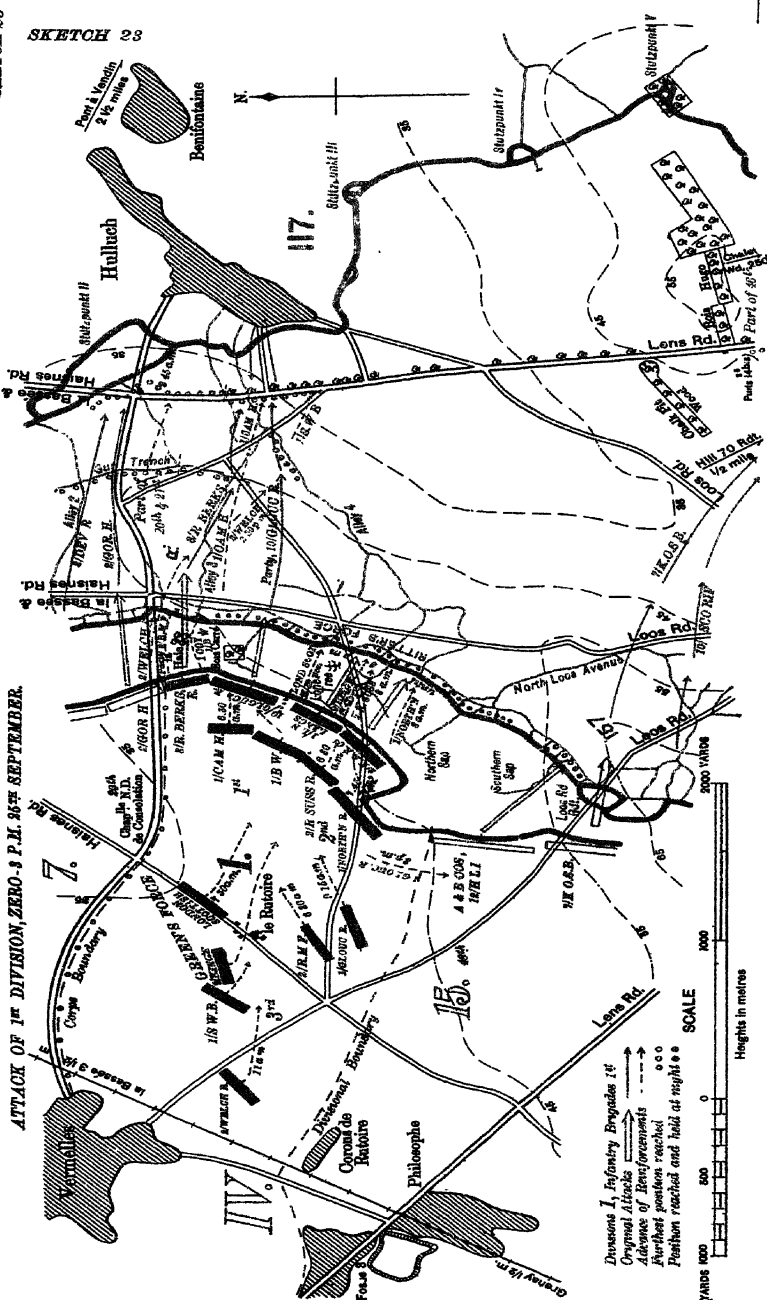
¹ Marked on Sketch 28 by the position of the 2/R. Sussex, 1/Black Watch and 1/Cameron's.

LOOS

ATTACK OF 1st DIVISION, ZERO-3 P.M. 26th SEPTEMBER.

SKETCH 23

SKETCH 23



Ordnance Survey, 1908

opposite side of the crest, were not visible from the front line.¹ To ensure observation, however, over the ridge, the enemy had run out two trenches, known as "Southern Sap" and "Northern Sap," in which it was believed there were machine guns concealed.² It was therefore decided not to attack the front between them directly, but, as soon as the assaulting brigades of the 15th and 1st Divisions had passed through on either flank, for the former division to capture it by bombing from the southern end.³ In consequence a gap of six hundred yards was left between the attack frontages of the 15th and 1st Divisions. 25 Sept.

The 1st Division was disposed with the 2nd and 1st Brigades in the front line and the 3rd in divisional reserve. The 2nd Brigade (Br.-General J. H. W. Pollard), on the right, was to assault on a 600-yard frontage between Northern Sap and Lone Tree, the solitary cherry tree in No Man's Land that had blossomed in May, but was now so mutilated that only a bare trunk, 15-feet high, and broken stumps of branches remained. After over-running the German front and support trenches, the assaulting battalions would be on ground which overlooked the Loos valley ; this they were to cross in a south-easterly direction, so as to bring their right in touch with the left of the 15th Division at Puits 14 bis and Bois Hugo, 2,000 yards ahead on the Lens—La Bassée road. Sketch 23.

The 1st Brigade (Br.-General A. J. Reddie), between Lone Tree and the Vermelles—Hulluch road, was to advance due east, with the southern part of Hulluch village as its first objective.

The two brigades were thus to attack from the first on divergent lines, and, to fill the increasing gap that would be created between them as they progressed, an independent force was formed by taking away from each of them their extra (fifth) battalion, the London Scottish (1/14th London) from the 1st Brigade and the 1/9th King's (Liverpool) from the 2nd Brigade. This detachment was kept directly under the division, and placed under Lieut.-Colonel E. W. B. Green of the 2/Royal Sussex. It was to move behind the inner flanks of the 1st and 2nd Brigades, and, on their

¹ The sector opposite the 1st Division was occupied by approximately two companies (400 men) of the German 157th Regiment.

² Southern Sap, however, turned out to be a mere scrape in the ground a few inches deep. This should have been discovered from lack of "shadow" in the aeroplane photographs, but the art of reading them was still in its infancy.

³ See f.n. page 197.

25 Sept. reaching the Lens—La Bassée road, was to close the gap between them.¹

From the Lens road the attack was to be continued against the German second position, a thousand yards beyond, between Bois Hugo and Hulluch. This further advance would be supported by the 3rd Brigade (Br.-General H. R. Davies), moving close behind, and would be carried out in co-operation with the 15th Division on the right, and the 7th Division (I. Corps) on the left. After crossing the second position, the 1st Division was to continue due eastwards to the Haute Deule canal.

Northwards from Northern Sap to the Vermelles—Hulluch road the British front line bulged slightly eastwards, so that the front of the 2nd Brigade faced south-east. Consequently when the wind veered round to the south during the period of the gas discharge, fumes both from its own cylinders and from those on the 15th Division front, whilst still in a very concentrated form, began to drift back across its jumping-off trenches. Although the gas was soon turned off, a number of casualties occurred, some amongst the gas personnel. The 2/K.R.R.C. (Lieut.-Colonel G. K. Priaulx) and 1/Loyal North Lancashire (Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Sanderson), the battalions which were to lead, each had about two hundred men thus put temporarily out of action, so that to make the assault the companies of the second wave had to be brought up to "leap-frog" the original front troops. At 6.20 A.M. the wind veered back to south-west, and the cylinders were turned on again, the majority of the men meanwhile having got out of the trench, to lie behind the parapets in order to avoid the fumes. The time for the assault was delayed for a few minutes to enable this further discharge of gas to drift away from the British trenches. But at 6.34 A.M., the 2/K.R.R.C. and the 1/Loyal North Lancashire began the advance, the men coughing and choking as they walked forward through the smoke and fumes. Two enemy machine guns, in sap-heads some forty yards in front of the main trench, one by Northern Sap and the other south

¹ For movements of Green's Force see Sketch 22.

The divisional operation orders directed the C.R.E. (Lieut.-Colonel H. F. Thuillier) to place "one Field Company [the 26th and 23rd were "detailed] and half the miners [Tunnellers] at the disposal of each of the "1st and 2nd Brigades, and one section of a Field Company at the disposal "of Green's Force". The remainder of the divisional engineers, the 1/1st Lowland Field Company (less a section), was kept in reserve at Philopophe. The 1st Division "Instructions" issued with the orders, and containing many points of interest, are given as Appendix 20.

of the Lone Tree, had escaped destruction during the bombardment, and were now able to enfilade the advancing lines of infantry, Lieut.-Colonel Sanderson being among the wounded. These guns would have inflicted much greater loss had it not been for two well-handled British machine guns pushed out into No Man's Land at zero on the flanks of the advance. 25 Sept.

The German front trench in this sector of the line was in an ideal position for defence, lying as it did just below the crest of the ridge. In consequence artillery observation both for cutting the wire and demolishing advanced saps had been very difficult, as also patrolling by night to investigate results. It was quickly seen that the barbed wire, an unusually formidable obstacle, some ten yards in breadth and staked low on the ground, was practically undamaged in front of the brigade. Riflemen and men of the North Lancashire went forward with wire-cutters to make a passage, but they were shot down or struck by bombs at every attempt, and the advance was checked.

Time was thus given not only for the Germans to come out of their dug-outs and man the front trench, which, like the wire, had not been seriously damaged by the bombardment, but also for reinforcements to arrive.¹ Though numerically only about a quarter of the strength of the attack, they now had the full advantages of the defence, as the artillery bombardment had lifted and passed on to more distant objectives. Manning the front trench, the Germans opened a heavy fire on the mass of the 2nd Brigade held up by the wire in front of them.

The leading British companies, unable to get forward, remained close up to the wire, taking any available cover in shell-holes and depressions; but the lines moving up in support wavered and fell back about a hundred yards, taking up a fresh position behind the crest midway across No Man's Land. Shortly after 7.30 A.M. the smoke and mist cleared, making the prospects of an assault still more hopeless. A few officers nevertheless rallied their men for another effort; but the attackers had lost heart and,

¹ There was at the most one company of the 157th Regiment holding this sector of the defence at the outset of the battle, but it had been at once reinforced by part of a neighbouring company, holding from Northern Sap southwards to Southern Sap, a sector which, it will be remembered, was not being attacked. The greater part of two other companies of the same regiment, in support in Loos, which had come forward along "North Loos Avenue", just in time to escape the advance of the 15th Division, also swelled the German ranks here, so that a force of over six hundred men was assembled against the 2nd Brigade.

25 Sept. individually and by groups, began to straggle or crawl back to their original trenches.

The attack of the 1st Brigade on the left was more successful. The 10/Gloucestershire (Lieut.-Colonel H. E. Pritchard) and the 8/R. Berkshire (Colonel W. C. Walton) led the way.¹ The gas, especially the fumes from some leaky cylinders, had affected these battalions also; but the advance, carried out in three lines at 50 paces distance, was not delayed on this account. Immediately in front of the brigade on the crest of the ridge were the remains of two small copses, Bois Carré in front of the Gloucestershire, and La Haie in front of the Berkshire. Both had been reduced to low shattered scrub and offered no obstacle and little cover; but saps had been dug forward to each from the German trench, and in them placed machine guns, which had not been destroyed during the bombardment. In crossing No Man's Land the battalions had many casualties from their fire, and suffered also from the German artillery, which was bursting shell in the cloud of smoke and gas in the hope of dispersing it.

Although the Gloucestershire, on the right, suffered particularly severely, they overran Bois Carré and captured the German front trench. Here, however, their further advance was held up by heavy rifle fire from the German support line eighty yards beyond. This they attacked over the open, again with heavy loss; but, on their approach, the Germans fled along the communication trenches towards Hulluch. The 10/Gloucestershire had, however, been destroyed as a battalion, and only sixty survivors continued the advance.

The Berkshire—who had rehearsed the attack on ground with trenches laid out to represent the German defences—managed to rush La Haie copse, cross No Man's Land and enter the enemy trenches without such severe losses as the Gloucestershire, although a number of casualties were incurred in cutting ways through the wire, which was only partially destroyed. The further advance of the battalion was equally successful, and before 8 A.M. its leading companies had reached the southern sector of Gun Trench, an intermediate line over twelve hundred yards from the British front. From here through the smoke the poplar trees along the Lens—La Bassée road could be seen some five hundred yards ahead. The 1/Cameron

¹ These were "K.8" battalions which had replaced the two Guards battalions transferred to the Guards Division.

Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel L. O. Græme), which had kept close behind in support, now carried on the advance with the Berkshire through Gun Trench, where three concealed field guns were captured, to the Lens road. There a halt was called, and small scouting parties were sent forward to reconnoitre Hulluch village. One party succeeded in getting through a portion of the German second position that was not wired, and possibly entered the village, but the others were held up by the entanglement, which was very thick and formed a serious obstacle. The trenches themselves appeared to be empty, and, beyond them, the scouts could see Germans retiring through Hulluch. At 9.10 A.M. a message was sent back from the Camerons to the 1st Brigade:—"One company reports that a small mixed party of our brigade have captured a trench close to Hulluch. Enemy reported to be retiring there."¹

A mixed force of the Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Camerons now faced the village; but the senior officers present did not consider it advisable to continue the attack against it with these three battalions, two of them gravely depleted, until the 2nd Brigade and Green's Force came up on the right, when a combined attack against the village could be organized.

To return now to the 2nd Brigade, on the right of the 1st, which was left about 7.30 A.M. hung up in No Man's Land. Soon after this hour, Br.-General Pollard, in view of the success of the 1st Brigade, ordered forward the supporting battalion—2/Royal Sussex (under Major E. F. Villiers)—and two companies of the 1/Northamptonshire

¹ There is still controversy as to whether men of the 1st Brigade entered Hulluch. Further investigation, after the battle, into a report sent back to First Army Headquarters that Hulluch had been captured brought the following replies from the brigade and divisional commanders concerned. Br.-General Reddie, commanding the 1st Brigade, wrote (17th October 1915): "no troops of the 1st Brigade reached the outskirts of Hulluch on 25th September. An officer with a dozen men reached a point 200 yards south-west of the western houses of Hulluch, but, finding themselves alone, fell back to bring up reinforcements. When these arrived they attempted to advance, but were prevented from doing so by fire from Hulluch." General Holland, commanding 1st Division, in a covering letter to this report, wrote: "no troops of the 1st Division were able to reach the trenches immediately west of Hulluch or penetrate into the village itself".

From individual statements and from diaries, there seems every reason to believe that a party of about 80 of the 1/Cameron Highlanders, scouts and individual soldiers of the 1st Brigade entered the village at this period of the battle, and remained until the early afternoon, when they were driven out by the reserve battalion of the 157th Regiment, sent up from Pont à Vendin to re-occupy Hulluch.

25 Sept. (Lieut.-Colonel G. A. Royston-Pigott), in brigade reserve, to make another attack against the German first line. They were to carry forward with them the remnants of the 1/North Lancashire, whilst the 2/K.R.R.C., which both in the gas period and in the attack had suffered most, was directed to reorganize in the British front trench.¹ This second assault was reported to be successful, and at 8.5 A.M. a message was sent to the 1st Division: "2nd Brigade at first held up, but Sussex have now got through into German trenches". General Holland, believing the German opposition to be finally broken on the whole front of his division, now hoped to make up for the delay. To hurry assistance to the three battalions of the 1st Brigade waiting in front of Hulluch, he ordered the 2nd Brigade to "push on with all speed", whilst Green's Force, from its assembly position about Le Rutoire, was directed to advance across the open to the British front and support trenches near Lone Tree, and there await orders. The 3rd Brigade, in divisional reserve about Le Rutoire, he ordered to follow close on the heels of Green's Force.

At 9.1 A.M. a contradiction of the earlier report reached divisional headquarters from the 2nd Brigade to the effect that the Sussex and the Northamptonshire had not entered the German trenches and that the second attack, like the first, had been held up in front of the uncut wire south of Lone Tree. This was unfortunately the case.²

The rifle and machine-gun fire from the German trenches directed against the troops in No Man's Land had the additional effect of keeping the open ground behind the

¹ On this occasion Private G. Peachment, 2/K.R.R.C., who was mortally wounded in attending to his wounded company commander, was awarded the V.C.

² The gallant manner in which these two battalions attempted to force a way into the German position is commemorated by the award to them of two V.C.s.:

Captain A. M. Read, 1/Northamptonshire, "though partially gassed, rallied, several times, parties of different units which were disorganized and retiring. He led them back to the firing line, and, utterly regardless of danger, moved freely about encouraging them under a withering fire. He was mortally wounded whilst carrying out this gallant work."

Sergeant H. Wells, 2/Royal Sussex, "when his platoon officer had been killed, took command and led his men forward to within fifteen yards of the German wire. Nearly half the platoon were killed or wounded, and the remainder were much shaken, but with the utmost coolness and bravery Sergeant Wells rallied them and led them forward. Finally, when very few were left, he stood up and urged them forward once more, but whilst doing this he was killed."

Private H. Kenny, 1/Loyal North Lancashire, also received the V.C. for going out six times to bring to safety wounded men lying in the open. He was wounded whilst passing the last man over the parapet.

front as far as Le Rutoire swept with bullets. It was 25 Sept. impossible to use the communication trenches which were already filled by the stream of wounded and gassed men making their way back from different parts of the line towards the dressing stations at and beyond Le Rutoire. Thus Green's Force—the London Scottish being cheered as their left passed over the trenches of the 1/Black Watch, then in reserve—and the 3rd Brigade had to advance across the open to the front trenches and suffered considerably.

The Germans opposing the 2nd Brigade had by now begun to work northwards along that part of their front trench which had been passed over and left vacant by the 1st Brigade. By 9 A.M. these Germans were abreast of Bois Carré and had re-occupied the sap leading into the scrub itself. In the opinion of Br.-General Reddie, commanding the 1st Brigade, the rear of his three battalions, now ranged along the Lens road facing Hulluch, was threatened. Instead, therefore, of sending the reserve battalion of his brigade—1/Black Watch (Lieut.-Colonel J. G. H. Hamilton)—to reinforce the attack on Hulluch as intended, he ordered it to advance to the east of La Haie copse, and then swing south, attacking down and astride the German front and support trenches, in order to take in flank and check the German movement northwards. The leading company in its advance across No Man's Land came under such a heavy fire from Bois Carré that only thirty of its number reached the German front trenches. Here they established themselves, and, blocking the trench southwards, formed a protective flank. In view however of the casualties of this company, the main body of the Black Watch was ordered to move more to the left by the trenches before crossing No Man's Land, but, finding them blocked with men, had considerable trouble in reaching the German front line.

The situation that confronted General Holland soon after 9 A.M. was therefore full of difficulty. By then the reports that had reached him showed that the attack of the 2nd Brigade had definitely failed. To the north and south of it, however, the German front defences had been broken through. From Lone Tree northwards the German first position had been overrun, and to the south, the 15th and 47th Divisions were pressing forward to their respective objectives, with Loos village reported to be in British hands. It was clear to him that the general advance would soon be

25 Sept. seriously checked by the big gap of some two thousand yards in its centre, between Puits 14 bis and Hulluch, caused by the failure of the 2nd Brigade to get forward.

In the circumstances, both Green's Force and the 3rd Brigade, not yet entangled in the meshes of the battle, might be moved round without difficulty across the German front defences through the big breaks, either to the north or south of the 2nd Brigade, and thence into position to fill the gap along the Lens road between the 15th Division and the 1st Brigade. The 2nd Brigade was, however, seriously committed; a large number of its men was still lying out in the open, close under the German wire, unable either to go forward or to return. From intelligence issued by British G.H.Q. prior to the battle, General Holland knew that there could only be a weak German force holding the six hundred yards of front facing this brigade, and that it was by now cut off from any support, either from Hulluch or Loos. He expected it to surrender at any moment if the attack of the 2nd Brigade were again pressed in combination with the efforts of two companies of the 12/Highland L.I. of the 15th Division which were attempting to bomb northwards along the German front trench from Loos Road Redoubt to Northern Sap.¹ Green's Force was therefore ordered to make yet another frontal assault on the left of the 2nd Brigade, whilst the 3rd Brigade advanced north of it through the break in the German defences near La Haie copse, to reinforce the right of the 1st Brigade.²

¹ The Germans had blocked their front trench north of Southern Sap, so the H.L.I. bombers could make little progress. "A" Company of the 12/H.L.I. entered Loos Road Redoubt and bombed up the German front and support trenches towards "B" Company. This latter, on the left, which had to bomb up Southern Sap, had a particularly hard task. The wire had purposely not been cut where the Sap joined the German front line, as it was hoped that the attack would come as a complete surprise. The Sap, turning out not to be a trench at all, the men had to get through uncut wire, with their left flank entirely exposed owing to the failure of the 1st Division to get forward. The companies lost nine out of ten officers, and more than half the rank and file, but fought their way 100 yards northwards from Southern Sap, where they had to stop for want of bombs. They were reinforced at 11 A.M. by a party of 6/Camerons, and then gained another three hundred yards, but, seeing no signs of the 1st Division, made another block. At 3 P.M. the trenches captured were handed over to the 1st Division, and the survivors withdrawn to the trenches allotted to the H.L.I. in the German support and front line.

² An order beginning as follows was sent to Colonel Green:—"It is essential that the 2nd Brigade should get forward without delay. Push on your two battalions for all you are worth so as to capture the Germans in front of it." Shortly afterwards an order was sent to the 3rd Brigade to send three of its battalions north of Green's Force to cross the German empty front trench about La Haie copse, and thence march south-eastwards

The divisional order to attack in support of the 2nd 25 Sept. Brigade, sent off at 9.10 A.M., did not reach Colonel Green, owing to three runners being hit, until 10.55, and it was past midday before his two battalions, the London Scottish (Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Lindsay) and 1/9th King's (Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Ramsay), had received their instructions, and were ready for the assault. The order definitely directed an attack with one battalion on each side of Lone Tree. Colonel Green, therefore, felt precluded from swinging round one of them to take the enemy in flank, and in view of the delays that had taken place there was no time for reference to Major-General Holland. So he sent the King's and the London Scottish to attack side by side, and they advanced by short section rushes across No Man's Land, with the Lone Tree as the point of direction for their inner flanks. But the approach of another attack did not have the expected effect on the resisting power of the Germans, who had worked forward northwards as far as Bois Carré. Before the advancing lines had reached the wire, still intact, they were greeted with a hail of bullets at close range. Every attempt to get into the enemy trenches was in vain, many men being shot as they endeavoured to cut a way through the wire. A line was therefore established close up to it in such cover as was available in the long grass or could be made with the entrenching implement, and the enemy kept engaged by fire. To the attainment of this object a machine gun of the 1/9th King's, brought across No Man's Land under a hail of bullets, materially assisted with oblique fire. Arrangements were also made for a company of the London Scottish to make a flank attack from the north; but, before this had effect, the 2/Welch, as will be seen, were to bring unexpected assistance.

At 1.15 P.M., however, the situation on the front Northern Sap—Bois Carré was still a deadlock, and General Holland at last decided to abandon the attempts to take the German position by frontal assault, and to send the remainder of his force round through the gap made by the 15th Division to the south. He accordingly wired to the 2nd Brigade:—"Collect all available men of your brigade, "leaving only sufficient to hold the line. Move them down

to the gap on the Lens road, where it would support the right of the 1st Brigade in its attack on the southern part of Hulluch. The fourth battalion of the 3rd Brigade—the 1/Gloucestershire—remained in brigade reserve until about 1 P.M., when, just as orders were being sent it to follow towards Hulluch, it was taken into divisional reserve.

25 Sept. "to the Vermelles—Loos road and across the German trenches at the Loos Road Redoubt. Then wheel up to your left and attack along line North Loos Avenue and Loos—La Bassée road, so as to get behind the Germans holding up your brigade." To assist this enveloping movement, the 1/Gloucestershire (Lieut.-Colonel A. W. Pagan), in divisional reserve, was attached to the 2nd Brigade. The latter formation, however, had suffered so heavily during the morning that the Gloucestershire were eventually asked to carry out the operation unassisted.

Meanwhile the forward movement of the 3rd Brigade, to the north of Green's Force, at first made slow progress, owing to the crowded state of the trenches and the difficulty of moving troops across the open. At 10.30 A.M., after receiving about 9.50 A.M. the divisional order to attack, Br.-General Davies reported his dispositions as follows:—"Munsters have been ordered to advance north of Bois Carré, and when through German trenches to wheel half right and attack in support of 1st Brigade. Welch follow in support, with orders to push through southern end of Hulluch. South Wales Borderers will be ready to support Welch."

The 2/Munster Fusiliers (Major A. Gorham), only about two hundred and fifty strong owing to lack of reinforcements, was assembled south of Le Rutoire Farm, when, about 10.45 A.M., it received the order to proceed to the front line north of Bois Carré. The distance to be covered was about a mile across ground intersected with old and new trenches and wire. An attempt was made to move up the communication trenches, but, as they were full of gassed and wounded men, Major Gorham gave the order to get out of the trenches and continue the advance above ground. Two of the companies lost direction in the maze of obstacles, and, bearing off to the right, came up with the left of Green's Force. They joined in the latter's efforts to make headway across No Man's Land, and were almost annihilated. The remainder of the battalion reached the front line opposite La Haie, but were so delayed in trying to gain touch with the two lost companies that the 2/Welch, in support, passed ahead of them whilst they were in the German front trenches, not realizing that it was leaving them on the right flank. Eventually this party of the Munsters, about a hundred strong, advanced, and crossing Gun Trench occupied a position facing Hulluch.

The 2/Welch (Lieut.-Colonel A. G. Prothero) was more successful. Starting the movement to support the Munsters soon after 11 A.M. from Le Rutoire Farm, a mile from the German front trenches, it was able to move unobserved in extended order in the open over the ground north of La Haie copse, two companies in front and two in support. No Man's Land and the German front line were here found completely deserted, and the battalion arrived at Gun Trench about 2 P.M., with scarcely any loss, except in the support companies, which had 150 casualties from German machine-gun fire. As no trace of the Munsters could be seen, Lieut.-Colonel Prothero ordered his lines to wheel half-right, continuing the advance in the same formation down into the valley in the direction of the junction of the Loos—Hulluch and Lens—La Bassée roads north of Chalk Pit Wood, where the right flank of the 1st Brigade was believed to rest. This movement led the battalion in rear of the enemy trenches south of Bois Carré, opposite which Green's Force and the 2nd Brigade were held up. A number of Germans promptly manned the reverse side of their support trench, whence they opened a heavy enfilade fire. Nevertheless the Welch kept moving forward, and by 2.30 P.M. their lines were approaching the track that leads from the Lone Tree eastwards towards Hulluch. At this moment the fire from the German support trench suddenly ceased and a German officer, bearing an extemporized white flag, followed by five other officers and 160 men came forward and surrendered. The Welch after this incident moved on again without delay and halted on the Lens—La Bassée road south-west of Hulluch. Except for a few snipers in the village, the battlefield seemed empty, but, as there were no troops on the flank, Colonel Prothero, after sending one company against the rear of the Germans still believed to be holding up the 2nd Brigade and Green's Force, decided to wait for support before he committed his battalion to a further advance. The men therefore lay down facing east along the road, touch being eventually gained with the 1st Brigade, five hundred yards to the north. The South Wales Borderers (Lieut.-Colonel R. S. Gwynn), who had followed behind the Welch were put into the German support trench, east of La Haie copse, later proceeding to the Lens—La Bassée road.

Threatened in rear by the detached company of the Welch, the remaining Germans, over four hundred of the

25 Sept. *157th Regiment* under Captain Ritter,¹ holding the front opposite Green's Force gave themselves up to the 1/9th King's and London Scottish. The gallant defence they had put up against many times their number proved to be a decisive factor in the battle, for the delay caused to the centre of the British attack had arrested that initial momentum of the offensive, in the full weight of which had lain its principal chance of success.²

Almost simultaneously with the surrender about Lone Tree a German counter-attack was delivered from Hulluch on the line of the 1st Brigade along the Lens road. It was an attempt by the reserve battalion of the *157th Regiment*, sent forward from Pont à Vendin during the morning, to bring relief to its I. Battalion in the Lone Tree trench. Advancing through Hulluch the battalion drove back the small British parties near, and perhaps in, the village across the open to the Lens road, but its attack on the 1st Brigade along that road was easily repulsed by fire, the ground being very open, and the extended companies gradually withdrew again to the cover of the village and the second-line trench there.

Sketch
24.

The 2nd Brigade and Green's Force were now free to advance across the German front trenches, and the survivors, only some 1,500 of all ranks,³ were assembled beyond the maze of the German front defences overlooking the wide expanse of the Loos valley. The out-flanking movement of the 1/Gloucestershire was abandoned. Leaden clouds, heavy with rain, darkened the sky, but in the failing light the battalions could see, two thousand yards ahead

¹ The 1/9th King's claim to have also captured men of the *59th Regiment*, and the London Scottish, men of the *51st*: but these must have been drafts for the *157th* wearing the shoulder straps of other units.

² The war diary of the German *157th Regiment* is modest and brief in its account of the affair: "The 1st Battalion", it says, "repulsed the constant British attacks, but no reinforcements could be sent forward to it from Hulluch throughout the morning in answer to Captain Ritter's requests. At length the battalion ran out of ammunition and hand-grenades, so that, when strong British forces began to move west of Hulluch across the rear of its position, it had to surrender."

³ The casualties during the fight had been as follows:—

	All Ranks.
2nd Brigade :	
2/K.R.R.C.	460
1/Northamptonshire	298
1/Loyal North Lincs.	489
2/Royal Sussex	481
Green's Force :	
London Scottish	260
1/9th King's	235

of them, the straight white line of the Lens road, and beyond it, on the northern slope of Hill 70, their objectives, the two strips of copse, Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo. For the moment the noise of battle had ceased, and, leaving behind them a No Man's Land of hideous memory, they moved in open order across the valley unmolested. By 5.20 P.M. they had reached the Lens road, their right on Bois Hugo, where the 1/Northamptonshire got in touch with the 6/Cameron Highlanders.¹ Soon after the junction of the 15th and 1st Divisions was thus completed the commanders of the 46th and 2nd Brigades, Br.-Generals Matheson and Pollard, met at the Chalk Pit, when the latter agreed to be responsible for Puits 14 bis.

With the exception of the party in Hill 70 Redoubt, the survivors of the Germans who had defended this sector were now all back in the second position on the reverse slope of Hill 70 and about Hulluch. They had been reinforced early in the afternoon by two battalions,² but apart from the abortive counter-attack on the 1st Brigade from Hulluch, they remained on the defensive awaiting the further reinforcements due to arrive during the evening from Douai. The 2nd Brigade³ and Green's Force were therefore able to entrench their position at and north of Bois Hugo unmolested. Their right lay against the northern edge of the wood, about two hundred yards east of the Lens road and in communication, by patrols only, with the 15th Division at the southern side of the wood; their left was close to the Lens road, 300 yards north of the Chalk Pit; the support trench was dug along the road, and the reserve (the London Scottish) sent to the Chalk Pit.

Owing to the severe losses in all the attacking battalions,

¹ By arrangement, these two battalions had a platoon post on the northern and southern sides respectively of Bois Hugo, about seventy yards apart. The wood was patrolled on the night of the 25th/26th, without any sign of the enemy being discovered.

² One of the 157th Regiment from Pont à Vendin, already mentioned, and one of the 26th Regiment from Annay.

On the march up the information given to the latter by the 117th Division staff was: "The enemy has attacked and taken Loos: there appear to be no German troops ahead on a front of about three miles, and the forward batteries have been over-run. How far the enemy has advanced is not known. The battalion will advance till it meets the enemy, and be prepared for any eventuality." Soon after leaving Vendin le Vieil, the 1/26th was therefore deployed in lines of companies, and later ordered to occupy the second position between Hulluch and *Stützpunkt* (Supporting Point) V, over 2,000 yards of front.

³ The 1/Gloucestershire remained attached to the 2nd Brigade, and did not rejoin the 3rd Brigade till the following morning (10.30 A.M.), spending the night digging in round Bois Hugo until relieved at 5 A.M.

25 Sept. which now numbered only about a quarter of the morning strength, the frontages occupied both by the 2nd Brigade and Green's Force and by the 1st and 3rd Brigades opposite Hulluch were considerably smaller than anticipated, and a gap of twelve hundred yards existed at this time between the inner flanks of these two halves of the 1st Division. Moreover the 2nd Brigade could see no sign of the 1st and 3rd Brigades to the north, and it was not until several hours later, during the night, that scouts of the 2nd Brigade finally made connexion across the gap between the two parts of the 1st Division. Unfortunately neither the 1st nor 3rd Brigades had been informed of or had noticed the advance of the 2nd Brigade and Green's Force to Bois Hugo, and no report of it reached Br.-General Reddie or Br.-General Davies during the evening. Towards evening they proceeded together along the front of their two brigades. There was no existing trench along the Lens road; it would have taken all night to dig sufficient cover in the hard chalk; and they believed their right to be exposed, being ignorant of the presence of the remainder of the 1st Division about Bois Hugo. As a precaution they therefore decided to swing back their centre and right, and occupy for the night as a fire trench the German communication trench, Alley 4, in rear of the road. Out of over six thousand men on the strength of the two brigades that morning, only some fifteen hundred were now assembled,¹ the left in touch with the 7th Division at the

¹ 1st Brigade :			
1/Black Watch	.	.	300 (approx.);
10/Gloucestershire	.	.	60 "
1/Camerons	.	.	150 "
8/R. Berkshire	.	.	180 "
3rd Brigade :			
2/Welch	.	.	400 "
1/S.W.B.	.	.	350 "
2/R.M.F.	.	.	120 "

These represent the numbers that had succeeded in keeping contact. A large number of men of all seven battalions got lost during the day in the confusion of the trenches, and, in the absence of leaders, stopped where they were or returned behind the British lines. In this way, deducting the casualties from those present with units of the 1st Division on the following morning, there were 1,950 men unaccounted for.

The approximate casualties during the day were as follows :—

1st Brigade :				All Ranks.
1/Black Watch	.	.	.	278
10/Gloucestershire	.	.	.	459
1/Camerons	.	.	.	387
8/Royal Berkshire	.	.	.	493

crossing of the Vermelles—Hulluch and Lens—La Bassée 25 Sept. roads, and the right thrown back south-westwards, along the German communication trench (Alley 4) running towards Lone Tree.

The withdrawal of the right of the 1st and 3rd Brigades to the line of Alley 4 increased the gap between it and the left of the 2nd Brigade and Green's Force to nearly fifteen hundred yards. That there was a gap at all never seems to have been realized at 1st Division headquarters. Both the 2nd Brigade and the 1st and 3rd Brigades had reported their positions about 5 P.M.; but at 6.22 P.M. the 1st Division informed the IV. Corps that Green's Force was in touch with the right of the 1st and 3rd Brigades—which was not the case. Between 7 and 8.30 P.M. General Rawlinson visited his divisional generals and was not told of any gap. When at 9.10 P.M. Br.-General Davies sent a message to the 1st Division (received at 10.35 P.M.) stating the new position of the 1st and 3rd Brigades, its significance must have been overlooked; for no further report was made to the IV. Corps, and the real situation remained unknown to General Rawlinson and the First Army all night. The gap in the 1st Division front was to have a most unfortunate influence on the fighting in this sector on the following day.

					All Ranks.
3rd Brigade :					
2/Welch	.	.	.	.	311
1/S.W.B.	.	.	.	.	121
2/R.M.F.	.	.	.	.	120
1/Gloucestershire	.	.	.	.	124

CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

25TH SEPTEMBER (*continued*)

THE ATTACK OF THE I. CORPS

(Maps 1, 7, 9 ; Sketches A, 19, 25, 26)

Map 1. FROM the Vermelles—Hulluch road northwards the ground falls very gradually for over two miles, dropping little more than thirty feet, down to the La Bassée canal. It is practically a plain, dominated, as already pointed out, by the prolongation of the low crest of the Grenay spur that curved in a wide crescent behind the German front between the Hulluch road and Fosse 8. In this sector the Germans held two important localities: the Quarries, a great chalk excavation on the crest line, over a hundred yards wide and twenty feet deep, with steep sides honey-combed with dug-outs; and Fosse 8, with its mine buildings and miners' cottages, "corons", and its slag-heap known as "the Dump". Between Fosse 8 and the canal was the large village of Auchy, strongly organized for defence, and the ground here was much built over, chiefly with cottages. With these exceptions a bare open space lay between the first and second German positions; but east of the latter were the villages of Hulluch, Cité St. Elie, and Haisnes, and the town of La Bassée. Each of these was organized for defence.

Map 7. The I. Corps (Lieut.-General H. de la P. Gough) was to break through the German first defence system between the Vermelles—Hulluch road and the La Bassée canal with its three divisions, the 7th, 9th and 2nd.¹ It was then to press on eastwards across the plain to the German

¹ See Appendix 21.

second position a mile beyond, and thence to the Haute 25 Sept.
Deule canal without a pause, in order to take advantage of the first surprise and give no time to the enemy's reserves to occupy his rearward defences. The 7th and 9th Divisions were to cross the German second line on the front Hulluch—Haisnes, and thence move through Wingles and Douvrin, respectively, the right of the 7th Division on the Vermelles—Hulluch—Pont à Vendin road, in touch with the IV. Corps. The 2nd Division, on the left, after capturing Auchy village, was to take position along the railway that runs north-west from Haisnes to the canal, so as to form a defensive flank to cover the further advance of the 7th and 9th Divisions. Further to protect the left flank during the advance beyond Haisnes, the 9th Division was to send out a small mobile flank guard.¹ No corps reserve was detailed, it being assumed that the 21st and 24th Divisions of the XI. Corps would come up early.

An alternative scheme had been prepared in case the Sketch
2nd Division should be unable to break through; for it ^{19.}
was fully realized that Auchy was a difficult problem and that the attack on it had little chance of success, after such a limited bombardment, should the wind fail to carry the gas in sufficient strength into the cellars and dug-outs of the village. In this event the 2nd Division was to stand fast, and the 9th Division was to form the defensive flank by occupying and holding a line from the northern edge of Fosse 8 along a German communication trench known as Pekin Alley, leading eastwards to Haisnes, whilst the 7th Division alone carried out the advance to the Haute Deule canal.

As in the case of the front of the IV. Corps, the German infantry force immediately available to oppose the assault of the three divisions of the I. Corps was small, consisting of only three regiments.²

¹ A composite force consisting of B squadron Glasgow Yeomanry, Divisional Cyclist Coy. (200 rifles), 10th Motor Machine-gun Battery (6 machine guns) and one battery R.H.A.

² From the Vermelles—Hulluch road northwards for 3,000 yards to the Vermelles—La Bassée railway, the 11th Reserve Regiment, with one battalion in the front defences. It had two companies from the Hulluch road to the Hohenzollern Redoubt (exclusive), facing the 7th Division, and two companies from the redoubt (inclusive) to the Vermelles—La Bassée railway, facing the 9th Division. Another battalion was in support, partly at Cité St. Elie and partly at Fosse 8, whilst its third battalion was in rest billets about Wingles, 3 miles from the German front trenches.

Northwards from the Vermelles—La Bassée railway to the canal, facing the 2nd Division was the 16th Regiment, with one battalion in the front line, and the other two battalions in support and reserve about the

7TH DIVISION

HULLUCH AND THE QUARRIES

25 Sept. The 7th Division (Major-General Sir T. Capper) was allotted the frontage of 1,400 yards between the Vermelles—
 Map 9. Hulluch road and the Hohenzollern Redoubt (exclusive).
 Sketch Behind this a series of five lines of trenches, eighty yards
 25. apart, had been dug so that the extended lines of the assaulting battalions might rise and advance from them simultaneously. As in the case of other divisions, short ladders had been placed in the trenches overnight to enable the men to climb up on to the parapet, and bridges put across the trenches which the successive lines had to cross.¹

The German defences in front of the division, besides being of considerable strength, had, contrary to expectation and reports, been little damaged by the bombardment. There were several strong points in the front line, and one in particular, in the centre, the Pope's Nose Redoubt, formed a slight salient from which machine guns could enfilade an advance over No Man's Land on either flank. Some six hundred yards behind the front defences was a more or less complete intermediate line, partly below and partly on the low crest of the Grenay spur. Thus, immediately astride the Hulluch road, and well concealed on the reverse slope of the crest, there was Gun Trench, a line of gun pits in which the Germans had placed the guns of two field batteries. Further north were Stone Alley and the Quarries. Communication trenches, Breslau and St. Elie Avenues (Alleys 2 and 1), led forward through the intermediate line to the first position. The defences, though well constructed and with a good command over the British lines, were, however, only weakly held, as has been described.²

Railway Triangle and La Bassée respectively, with the *11th Jäger Battalion* in and near Haisnes.

From the canal to the vicinity of Festubert was a third regiment, the *56th*, distributed similarly to the *16th*.

¹ 3,500 ladders and 2,500 trench bridges had been provided by the divisional engineers (Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Boileau). The *54th* and *95th* and *1/2nd Highland Field Co. R.E.* were allotted to the brigades, and followed the infantry, with orders to widen gaps in the parapets and strengthen points in the lines captured.

² Two companies of the *11th Reserve Regiment* held the front trench and two companies were in support, one in Cité St. Elie and one in the Quarries.

Breaking through the front defences, the 7th Division 25 Sept. was to advance eastwards over the low crest of the Grenay spur, capture Gun Trench and the Quarries in the first rush, and then push on against the German second position, its right directed on the northern part of Hulluch, and its left on Cité St. Elie. The original defences of these villages had been greatly strengthened and connected by a large enclosed work, *Stützpunkt II.*, the front face of which, Puits Trench, extended across the greater part of the open ground, seven hundred yards, between them.

The assault was to be made by the 20th and 22nd Brigades, the former with the 95th Field Company R.E. and No. 1 Mortar Battery attached, and the latter with the 54th Field Company R.E. and No. 10 Mortar Battery. The 21st Brigade and 1/2nd Highland Field Company R.E. were in reserve. The 7th Division artillery (Br.-General J. G. Rotton) was organized into two mobile groups and a reserve to follow the advance.¹

On the 7th Division front the wind was about south-west and very light when the time came to release the gas and smoke. In some sectors the gas was not turned on, for it would have blown across the British front; but, as a whole, both smoke and gas were reported to be working well. Nevertheless a certain number of men were affected by them; and these, in accordance with the instructions that no one was to move if gassed, remained in the front trench when zero hour arrived.

The 20th Brigade (Br.-General Hon. J. F. H.-S.-F.-Trefusis), the right of the 7th Division, was to attack the part of the front known as Breslau Trench. Its two leading battalions, the 2/Gordon Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel J. R. E. Stansfeld) and 8/Devonshire (Lieut.-Colonel A. G. W. Grant),² issued from their trenches in lines of companies punctually at 6.30 A.M. The advance was at first completely enveloped in the gas cloud, and here, too, the smoke-helmets brought more curses than blessings from all ranks. After a few minutes the men, almost suffocated, had to remove them to get breath, many being subsequently incapacitated by the gas fumes. In an effort

¹ The 20th Brigade was supported by the XIV. Brigade R.H.A. and XXII. Brigade R.F.A.; the 22nd Brigade by the XXXV. Brigade R.F.A., and two batteries of the CVI. Brigade R.F.A. (the latter being attached from the 24th Division newly arrived from England). The XXXVII. (Howitzer) Brigade R.F.A. (81st and 85th Batteries) and another brigade, the CVII., from the 24th Division, were in divisional reserve.

² The 8/ and 9/Devonshire had replaced the 1/Grenadier Guards and 2/Scots Guards, when the Guards Division was formed.

25 Sept. minutes from shrapnel, machine-gun and rifle fire, Lieut.-Colonel Storey, wounded, its second-in-command, three of its four company commanders and seven other officers. The survivors, including only five officers (one of whom was immediately killed) reached Gun Trench about 9.15 A.M. It being impracticable to attempt an attack on Puits Trench, which appeared undamaged by the bombardment, with the small force available, they set about putting Gun Trench in a state of defence against counter-attack.

In the meantime Br.-General J. G. Rotton (7th Division artillery), on hearing of the successful advance of the 20th Brigade past Gun Trench to the Lens—La Bassée road, had, at 8.5 A.M., ordered the XXII. Brigade R.F.A. (less 106th Battery) to move forward from Vermelles by the Hulluch road to a position immediately south of the road, about Chapelle Notre Dame de Consolation, seven hundred yards behind the original front trenches. The two batteries, the 104th and 105th, moving over the open grassland, reached their position without loss, and came into action against Cité St. Elie about 9 A.M. Three-quarters of an hour later, Br.-General Rotton ordered the XXXV. and XXXVII. Brigades R.F.A. to move up from south-west of Vermelles to a position north of the Hulluch road and on the left of the XXII. Brigade. The 59th Siege Battery (First Army Heavy Artillery) was also moved up on the left, arriving shortly after midday. Observation officers were sent forward at once to Gun Trench.

About the same time, Lieut.-Colonel H. H. Tudor, commanding the XIV. Brigade R.H.A. (7th Division artillery), had ordered forward on his own initiative a section of T Battery (two 18-pdr. guns)¹ from Vermelles along the Hulluch road to a position in No Man's Land in a dip which he had discovered behind the old German front trenches. It was first necessary to clear some felled trees which blocked the road, and then it was a matter of galloping. Under sniping at three hundred yards range from an isolated party of Germans in their old front trench and heavy rifle fire at eight hundred yards from the right—where the enemy still held his front line opposite the left of the 1st Division—the two Horse Artillery guns pushed on. Though they were brought to a standstill for a few minutes through a driver and the leading pair being hit, they reached the position assigned. With a forward

¹ See Order of Battle, Appendix 8.

observation officer in Gun Trench, the section was in time **25 Sept.** to open fire on the before-mentioned German infantry who were entering Cité St. Elie. About midday Lieut.-Colonel Tudor decided to send forward the remainder of T Battery to join the advanced section. Although the Hulluch road was now under German artillery fire from east of Haisnes and east of Hulluch, as well as rifle fire, the two sections, advancing at full gallop, cheered by all the troops who saw them, were successfully brought into action in No Man's Land without a check, only a few horses being slightly wounded.

On the left of the 20th, the 22nd Brigade (Br.-General J. McC. Steele) attacked on a frontage of six hundred yards. It suffered from the gas that was hanging about just as the 20th had done. At first the smoke-cloud screened the attack, but the last part of No Man's Land, a distance of about thirty yards to the German wire, had to be crossed in full view of the German position. The wire was found to be very thick and mostly uncut, for long grass had made observation difficult, and the leading lines—1/South Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel R. M. Ovens) and 2/Royal Warwickshire (Lieut.-Colonel B. P. Lefroy, mortally wounded in leading the attack)—attempted literally to scramble across it,¹ and, swept by enfilade fire, incurred very heavy losses.² Undeterred, the remnants of the two battalions, supported by the 1/Royal Welch Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel R. A. Berners), of which unit the uncut wire also took heavy toll, succeeded in forcing their way through and entering the front trench.³ By 7.30 A.M. the German support trench, one hundred yards beyond, had also been captured, with the exception of Slit Redoubt, a strong point in it containing a machine-gun emplacement and space for thirty or forty rifles. The fire from this work held up the brigade, but, with the help of a party of the 2/Border, of the 20th Brigade, which approached the redoubt from the south, its garrison was forced to surrender. Seventy men were also taken prisoner in the support trench.

The 2/Queen's (Lieut.-Colonel M. G. Heath), in brigade

¹ Private A. Vickers, 2/Royal Warwickshire, was awarded the V.C. for cutting a gap under heavy fire.

² Of the 21 officers and 729 men of the 1/South Staffordshire who went into action, 18 officers and 480 other ranks became casualties during the day, most of these meeting their fate at this period.

Of the 17 officers and 650 other ranks of the 2/Royal Warwickshire, no officer and only 140 other ranks escaped unwounded.

³ The losses of the 1/R. Welch Fusiliers on this day were 16 officers and 426 other ranks.

25 Sept. reserve, now (8.30 A.M.) arrived and carried on the attack with fresh energy towards the Quarries, which, with the trench immediately to the north, were captured, with about fifty prisoners, about 9.30 A.M. Part of the battalion pushed ahead and reached Cité Trench, which covered Cité St. Elie.¹ An advance was also made by parties of the South Staffordshire along a communication trench to Cité Trench,² where they were held up by showers of bombs. Some men, under Lieut.-Colonel Ovens, nevertheless penetrated to the point at which the trench entered the outskirts of the village, whence they could see many Germans moving hurriedly away. Owing to lack of numbers, it was found impossible to remain in Cité Trench or destroy the thick wire in front of it to facilitate the bringing up of reinforcements, and the South Staffordshire therefore withdrew a hundred yards. But soon heavy fire both from Cité St. Elie and Cité Trench forced all to return to the Quarries, where a position was being organized by the 22nd Brigade beyond the eastern and northern sides. As it was observed that the enemy continued to leave Cité St. Elie, about 2 P.M. a company of the 2/Queen's was sent up the communication trench and actually entered the village; but it was immediately shelled out, it is thought by British guns, and compelled to return. By 3 P.M. the extemporized defences of the Quarries were completed and telephone lines laid; and later at 6.30 P.M. the 54th Field Company R.E. came up and roughly wired the position.³

Meanwhile the 21st Brigade (Br.-General H. E. Watts), the divisional reserve, had been sent up to take part in the battle. It had moved forward soon after zero hour from about Vermelles across the open in platoons in single file in order to occupy the front-line trenches vacated by the two assaulting brigades. Originally detailed to pass through them and move on the Haute Deule canal, Major-General Capper now ordered it to support the 20th Brigade on the right and press on to Hulluch, thereby hoping to put an end to the temporary stand at the Slit Redoubt in front of the 22nd Brigade. At 9.30 A.M. when he heard that this resistance had been overcome, he broke up the 21st Brigade and ordered it to leave the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers

¹ About the word "Cité", on Sketch 25.

The losses of the 2/Queen's were 11 officers and 261 other ranks.

² Near "Tr." on Sketch 25.

³ The wiring was continued during the night by the 95th and 1/2nd Highland Field Companies.

in reserve and to advance in two parts:—the right half 25 Sept. to pass through the 20th Brigade with Hulluch as its objective, and the left half through the 22nd Brigade to capture Cité St. Elie.

On the right, the 2/Bedfordshire (Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Onslow) and 2/Wiltshire (Lieut.-Colonel B. H. Leatham) went forward, each in lines of half companies, on a frontage of two hundred and fifty yards. Little or no fire was encountered until about 11 A.M., when the Loos—Haisnes road, immediately east of the German original front defences, was reached. In crossing over the slightly convex slope between this road and Gun Trench, on which the only cover was rank grass, the advancing lines were raked by intense and sustained machine-gun and rifle fire from Cité St. Elie, about seven hundred yards to their left front.¹ The uncut wire in front of Hulluch was clearly visible; and the battalions, unable to go further, halted in Gun Trench, joining the parties of the Devonshire and Border Regiments. Here they had the support about a thousand yards behind them of T Battery R.H.A., of a section of the 35th (Howitzer) Battery, XXXVII. Brigade R.F.A., and of a section of the 59th Siege Battery (old pattern 6-inch howitzers) which had come up sedately at a walk on the left and right of T, about 1 P.M. without interference from the enemy.²

The left half of the 21st Brigade, the 2/Green Howards (Lieut.-Colonel W. H. Young), supported by the 1/4th Cameron Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel H. Fraser), had a less costly journey, and reached the Quarries. But here it was held up by heavy fire from Cité Trench and shelled from the direction of Haisnes. Both battalions therefore remained at the Quarries holding a line beyond its southern edge and the northern part of Stone Alley.

Two officer patrols sent forward from Gun Trench to reconnoitre the Cité St. Elie defences now reported "the enemy's second line strongly held on northern and " western edges of the village with rifles and machine guns; " houses loop-holed and a strong wire obstacle in front of

¹ By the time the battalions arrived at Gun Trench, the Bedfordshire had lost their commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel Onslow, wounded, their adjutant and all four company commanders, with 250 other ranks; whilst the casualties of the Wiltshire were 7 officers and 200 other ranks.

² The 6-inch howitzers—which went up without platforms, these being sent up during the afternoon—remained until 10 P.M. when they were withdrawn to rejoin their battery near Le Rutoire Farm; T Battery and the 4.5-inch howitzer section retired about 1 A.M. on the 26th, after the loss of the Quarries.

25 Sept. "Cité Trench undamaged by our bombardment". Word was accordingly sent back to the brigadier that further attacks were useless unless properly organized and preceded by a thorough artillery preparation. Divisional orders were therefore issued to shell Cité St. Elie and its defences until 4 P.M., at which time the 21st Brigade, or rather such portions of it as could be assembled, were to renew their attack. By 4 P.M., however, it was clear to those watching the bombardment from Gun Trench that neither the wire, nor Cité Trench, nor the front cottages of Cité St. Elie, whose cellars concealed machine guns, had been sufficiently damaged to justify an assault, and Lieut.-Colonel Leatham (Wiltshire) reported that an attack against these undamaged defences with tired troops was only likely to lead to disaster. In this view both Br.-General Watts and Major-General Capper concurred, and the attack was cancelled. Two lines of support trenches were then begun behind Gun Trench, and measures taken to defend Stone Alley on the left.

At 7.30 P.M. corps orders, issued at 6.5 P.M., were received by the 7th Division. They directed the consolidation of the ground gained, which was now as follows:

The survivors of the 2/Gordons and 6/Gordons, with a mixture of 8/Devonshire and 9/Devonshire, were astride the Vermelles—Hulluch road near where it crosses the Lens—La Bassée road, on a front of five hundred yards. Their right was in touch with the IV. Corps, but, as their left was exposed to Cité St. Elie, they had been ordered to dig in, picks and shovels being sent forward to them, and also two 1.5-inch trench mortars, to secure the defence of their advanced position. The remainder of the 20th Brigade and the two battalions of the 21st, the Wiltshire and Bedfordshire, held Gun Trench from the Vermelles—Hulluch road to Stone Alley. The two left battalions of the 21st Brigade held Stone Alley up to and including the southern edge of the Quarries, whilst the fifth battalion of this brigade, the 2/Scots Fusiliers, was still back in reserve in the old British and German front trenches. The 22nd Brigade, a skeleton of its former self, although the detachments which had reached Cité Trench had come back, held the eastern and northern fronts of the Quarries.

The new front was closely supported by three brigades of artillery, with a horse artillery battery and two sections of howitzers, in No Man's Land within fifteen hundred yards of the new line. The remainder of the 7th Division

artillery was still in its original positions, a mile behind, 25 Sept. about Vermelles and west of the Vermelles—La Bassée railway.

9TH DIVISION

THE CAPTURE OF THE HOHENZOLLERN REDOUBT AND
FOSSE 8

The defences to be carried by the 9th Division (Major-General G. H. Thesiger),¹ a formation in action for the first time, although it had been in the trenches since June, offered special difficulty. They included the mine buildings and Dump of Fosse 8, the capture of which was regarded as of great importance, and the Hohenzollern Redoubt. The Dump was a huge flat-topped slag-heap, twenty feet high, with excellent view over the district on all sides. It was the chief German observation station in the sector, and would be equally valuable in British hands for the further advance to and beyond Haisnes and St. Elie. It was tunnelled in many places to form shell-proof shelters both for machine guns and observers, and its importance to the Germans was shown by their care in protecting it. For this purpose, on a rise of ground four hundred yards in front of their original line, that is Dump and Fosse Trenches, they had elaborated a large closed entrenchment wired all round, the Hohenzollern Redoubt, considered the strongest work on the whole front of attack. Its face, three hundred yards long and slightly convex, following generally the contour of the ground, was prolonged to join up with Dump and Fosse Trenches by two arms known to the British as "Big Willie" and "Little Willie".²

Map 9:
Sketch
26.

By corps instructions, the two assaulting brigades of the 9th Division, the 26th and 28th, after capturing the front and support trenches for a width of fifteen hundred yards between the left of the 7th Division and the Vermelles—La Bassée railway, and overrunning the Hohenzollern Redoubt, the Dump and buildings of Fosse 8, were to press on eastwards to the Lens—La Bassée road. Then, their right on the northern houses of Cité St. Elie and their left on the village of Haisnes, they were to advance over the

¹ Major-General Thesiger had taken over on the 9th September from Major-General H. J. S. Landon, who had been in command since March 1915.

² The front attacked by the 9th Division was held by part of the 11th Reserve Regiment: see f.n. page 225.

25 Sept. German second position between those two villages, and, reinforced by the 27th Brigade, the divisional reserve, carry forward the attack through Douvrin to the line of the Haute Deule canal in co-operation with the 7th Division on the right. At the final brigade conferences the commanding officers were definitely informed that the divisions of the XI. Corps would pass through the attacking troops and carry on the advance.

The 9th Division artillery (Br.-General E. H. Armitage) was organized, like that of the 7th Division, into two mobile groups and a reserve.¹

The 26th Brigade (Br.-General A.B. Ritchie) on the right, was to overrun in one rush the Hohenzollern Redoubt and Fosse 8 with its two leading battalions. If these were able to reach the eastern side of the Dump without reinforcement, the two supporting battalions were to be directed south of the Fosse and to lead the way to Haisnes. The two original leading battalions would then reorganize and follow in support, leaving the Fosse to be consolidated by the 28th Brigade. These orders seemed so optimistic that several battalion commanders asked if they had correctly understood them, and one officer remarked, "it seems to 'be forgotten that infantry don't gallop'". Yet what was accomplished did not fall much short of what was asked of the troops.

In spite of the strength of the position, the assault of the 26th Brigade was a notable success. The bombardment of the Hohenzollern Redoubt by two 9.2 howitzers (under Major C. W. Collingwood)—hidden alongside a wood in front of Beuvry—assisted by both ground and aerial observation, though ammunition was short, had been most effective. Full advantage of this was taken by the well-trained 9th Division, aided by the additional preparations made in view of the attack being part of the alternative plan that was to be carried out if the discharge of gas was not possible.² Amongst other things, Russian saps had been dug towards the redoubt, and during the

¹ LII. Brigade R.F.A. was to support the 26th Brigade, and LI. Brigade R.F.A., the 28th Brigade. The L. and LIII. (Howr.) Brigades R.F.A., with No. 7 Mountain Battery R.G.A. (less one section, two guns, with the IV. Corps) remained available for counter-battery work and general service on the whole front of the division.

The 63rd, 64th and 90th Field Companies R.E., though nominally affiliated to infantry brigades, were all held in divisional reserve under the C.R.E., Lieut.-Colonel H. A. A. Livingstone, as was the 9/Seaforth Highlanders, the divisional Pioneer battalion.

² See page 157.

night previous to the attack these had been opened out 25 Sept. and their heads joined up by a trench, so that the front line from which the assault was made was within a hundred and fifty yards of the face of the redoubt.

The assault was led by the 7/Seaforth Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel W. T. Gaisford), which wore diced glengarries, and the 5/Cameron Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel D. W. Cameron of Lochiel), in dark blue glengarries; and, to prevent confusion, the supporting battalions behind them were placed according to their caps: the 8/Gordon Highlanders (Colonel H. Wright), diced glengarries, behind the Seaforths, and the 8/Black Watch (Colonel Lord Sempill), dark glengarries, behind the Camerons. The Seaforths left the new trench on the stroke of 6.30 A.M., covered not only by the gas already discharged, but by the throwing of phosphorous smoke-grenades and a barrage of smoke-shell from Stokes mortars. These together formed a thick yellow screen, but the slight breeze did not carry it far into No Man's Land. Many men, indeed, suffered from its effects. However it hung about sufficiently in front of the British trenches to enable the leading companies to form up in extended lines in the open behind it, ready for the assault when the artillery barrage lifted from the German front trench. When the advance began the Seaforth Highlanders soon passed through the screen, and before reaching the redoubt suffered considerably from fire. The wire here had been well cut by the artillery, and the Highlanders were able to get through into the front face of the redoubt without delay. This taken, the Germans did not put up any ordered resistance in the redoubt itself, and the Seaforths bombed their way through it and thence, without many further casualties, down the inner communication trenches, and North Face and South Face, into Fosse Trench, the former front line. This was reached soon after 7 A.M., and the advance was at once continued across the open towards Fosse 8, and the buildings and miners' cottages on its northern side. The Seaforths cleared these with little difficulty, the few Germans here and in the shelters in the Dump retiring northwards towards Auchy without offering resistance. By 7.30 A.M. the Seaforths had reached the Three Cabarets and were lining Corons Trench beyond the Fosse. Here, according to their orders, they halted and companies were reorganized.

The Camerons, on the left of the Seaforths, delayed

25 Sept. their assault for ten minutes in the hope that the wind might carry the gas and smoke-cloud away from their trenches towards Little Willie, their objective. It was, however, too slight, and at 6.40 A.M. the assault was delivered through the smoke-screen. Once beyond it, the leading lines were enfiladed from their left front, from "Mad (short for Madagascar) Point", and the first three lines suffered heavily. Nevertheless pressing on at a good pace, they entered Little Willie, the wire in front of it having been well broken by the bombardment. The Germans about the group of cottages called "Madagascar" now enfiladed them, but soon transferred their attention to the 28th Brigade on their immediate front, so that the Camerons were able to proceed without further hindrance, and entered Fosse Trench at 7.10 A.M. The miners' cottages beyond had already been cleared by the left of the Seaforths, and by 7.45 A.M., fifteen minutes after the arrival of the latter, the Camerons were up in line with them between the Three Cabarets and the Corons de Pekin, the block of houses north of the Dump. To replace the casualties incurred by the Camerons in the early part of the advance, they had gradually been reinforced by the 8/Black Watch, so that three companies of this battalion were now up in the line, having lost heavily by machine-gun fire from Madagascar as they advanced.¹

Shortly after the battalions had joined up in front of the Dump Lieut.-Colonel Gaisford (7/Seaforth Highlanders) received orders that his battalion and the 5/Cameron Highlanders were to remain where they were and convert Corons Trench into a fire trench to cover Fosse 8. Owing to the failure of the 2nd Division, further north, to capture Auchy village and advance to the Auchy—Haisnes railway, the alternative scheme for the 9th Division now came into operation; that is, it was to form a defensive flank facing north-east between Fosse 8 and Haisnes village. It was soon clear, however, that the 28th Brigade on the left had failed to capture Madagascar Trench. It was therefore impossible for the 26th Brigade to advance towards Haisnes, and it had to prepare to defend Fosse 8 against a counter-attack either from the north or from the north-east, from Auchy or from Haisnes.

This brigade had demonstrated that with an element of surprise and good artillery preparation the German line

¹ The 8/Black Watch lost 19 officers and 492 other ranks in the three days' fighting, 25th-27th September, 70 per cent of this total on the 25th.

could be broken. Unfortunately no attempt was made to exploit the success by rolling up the German line on the right or left. 25 Sept.

The difficulties of the Seaforths, Camerons and Black Watch in consolidating their conquest were increased by the fact that the Germans had flooded Corons Trench knee deep from a sluice prior to their retirement, so that a firing step had to be made in the chalk above the water-level throughout its length. The men, assisted by the 90th Field Company R.E. sent up from divisional reserve to put Fosse 8 in a state of defence, worked admirably, in spite of continuous machine-gun and rifle fire from the communication trenches facing the Fosse.¹ They suffered heavily from this and also from a spasmodic artillery fire from German batteries east of Haisnes—fortunately soon smothered by the 9.2 howitzers whose commander had established an observation post on the Dump—but notwithstanding these troubles, the preparations for the defence of Fosse 8 were quickly completed. By 10.30 A.M. the four hundred Seaforths, one hundred Camerons and two hundred and fifty Black Watch in the firing line, with the gaps in their lines filled by the engineers, had consolidated a position covering the Dump, the Fosse itself and the Corons de Pekin. During this period Lieut.-Colonel Gaisford was killed and Colonel Lord Sempill severely wounded, and Lieut.-Colonel Cameron of Lochiel (5/Camerons) took over command of the defence of Fosse 8. After a time, with the help of artillery linesmen, telephone communication was opened with brigade headquarters, but it was cut so often that only three messages came through on the 25th, although the heavy artillery line pegged to the side of trenches remained working all day.²

To complete the preparations against a counter-attack the four 2.75-inch guns of No. 7 Mountain Battery R.G.A., were at 9.15 A.M. ordered forward from Annequin to a position behind the British front trenches, south-west of the Hohenzollern Redoubt. They came into action at 10.30 A.M. ready to stop the advance of further German

¹ Occupied by companies of the *11th Jäger Battalion*, which moved forward from Haisnes along Pekin Alley and Cemetery Alley, two communication trenches leading up south of Auchy to Madagascar Trench.

² The artillery observers on the Dump were driven from it next day, as a result of an "attack" on them by their own infantry. The appearance of these troops on the summit drew the attention of the enemy's guns, and rendered stay near there impossible.

25 Sept. reinforcements from Auchy or Haisnes. A Battery of the LII. Brigade R.F.A. followed shortly afterwards, and came into action alongside them.

THE FAILURE TO CAPTURE MADAGASCAR TRENCH

The advance of the 26th Brigade was directly affected, as has been seen, by the lack of support on its left flank. This was due to the failure of the 28th Brigade, the left brigade of the division. On the front both of this brigade and of the 2nd Division as far as and beyond the La Bassée canal, the direction of the wind was even less favourable for the use of gas than on any other sector of the battle front. On the higher ground astride the Vermelles—Hulluch road and facing Loos, the slight breeze was from the south-west and south, but here about the La Bassée canal it was more from the south-east. Its changeful fits during the period of the gas discharge carried the cloud of gas and smoke back against the waiting battalions, and seriously affected them. By 6.30 A.M. it had actually drifted behind the British trenches, so that the attack of the 28th Brigade, with numbers reduced by gas casualties and completely unprotected by smoke, was begun under very adverse conditions. To add to these grave disadvantages, the German artillery placed a barrage on the British front trench; and some of the gas cylinders were hit, and burst with fatal effect to those waiting near by for the signal to assault.

In or near the German front trench opposite the 28th Brigade (Br.-General S. W. Scrase-Dickins), between the Vermelles—Auchy road (inclusive) and the Vermelles—La Bassée railway were three small closed works. Opposite the right was “Strong Point”, a sap projecting from Little Willie; in the centre, “Mad Point”, which blocked the Vermelles—Auchy road near the small hamlet of Madagascar; and, to the left front, “Railway Redoubt”, commanding the open ground on either side of the Vermelles—La Bassée railway. Mad Point had been badly damaged by the bombardment, but was still occupied, whilst Strong Point and Railway Redoubt had suffered little—as was reported several times during the preliminary bombardment—and their machine guns were in a position to bring crossfire to cover the seven hundred yards frontage of Madagascar Trench lying between Little Willie and the

Vermelles—La Bassée railway: that is the whole assault 25 Sept. frontage of the 28th Brigade.

The 6/King's Own Scottish Borderers (under Major W. J. S. Hosley, Lieut.-Colonel H. D. N. Maclean, with his adjutant, having been wounded in moving up to the front), attacking on the right astride the Vermelles—Auchy road, either by accident or design, was not fired on at first, and was able to reach the German wire with but few casualties. Here, however, in front of the maze of entanglement, breast-high and ten feet across, a broad ditch had been filled with stakes and barbed wire, and re-covered with turf, so as to conceal the obstacle. Some of the men fell into this trap, and those who crossed it were faced by the entanglement beyond.¹ The leading lines lay down whilst men with wire-cutters went forward and tried to make passages. In the meantime the supporting lines had been coming on, and the greater part of the battalion was lying in dense formation close up to the wire, when suddenly the machine guns in the concrete emplacements of Strong Point opened a heavy fire that completely enfiladed its ranks.² The last line of the Scottish Borderers, which was still crossing No Man's Land, was able to get back—some seventy men in all—and a few of the remainder of the battalion managed to crawl in during the morning.³

On the left of the Borderers the three leading companies of the 10/Highland Light Infantry (Lieut.-Colonel J. C. Grahame, and, when he was gassed, Major H. C. Stuart) rose simultaneously from the front and support trenches, and at once came under a heavy fire from the machine guns in Railway Redoubt, which had a clear field of fire across No Man's Land. The first line was stopped and practically annihilated before it had gone twenty yards, whilst the second and third lines lost very heavily in moving across

¹ The unbroken condition of the German wire here did not come altogether as a surprise. On the previous night when patrols went forward during the interval of the bombardment to investigate the damage done—for observation of it was difficult owing to a swell in the ground—they were fired at by Germans out in No Man's Land, covering working parties repairing the wire, and were unable to proceed.

² The one weak company of the German *11th Reserve Regiment* holding this sector of the front had been withdrawn prior to the battle to the support trench fifty yards in rear of Madagascar Trench, so that the machine guns both at Strong Point and Mad Point had a free field of fire. The company had no reinforcements until 2 hours later when the *11th Jäger Battalion* came up from Haisnes.

³ The casualties of the 6/K.O.S.B. were 20 officers (all that went into action with it) and 680 men. No more than 46 men under a corporal could be assembled at the end of the day.

25 Sept. the open from the support trenches behind. The fourth company, making a further effort fifteen minutes later, was held up in a similar way, and had to return to the original front trench.¹

The two supporting battalions, the 11/Highland L.I. (Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Fergusson), and the 9/Scottish Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Northey) were now engaged. The former was ordered by Br.-General Scrase-Dickins, at 9.30 A.M., to send forward two companies to support the Scottish Borderers. These advanced, but were checked almost at once by machine-gun fire from Strong and Mad Points, and, though they lost heavily, were unable to improve the situation. The 9/Scottish Rifles also were ordered to send two companies to Madagascar to support the 10/Highland L.I. and form a defensive flank; but this order was cancelled, as it was obvious that there was no one in front except dead and wounded, and a pause ensued.

At 11.15 A.M. General Gough, the corps commander, in view of the success of the 26th Brigade, directed that the 28th should make another effort to capture Madagascar Trench, attacking at 12.15 P.M. To assist it, he ordered a bombardment of all the German defences between Auchy village and Fosse 8 by as much of the artillery of the 2nd and 9th Divisions as possible. This, however, proved to be quite inadequate to prepare the position for frontal assault. The course of the previous fighting had not been clearly reported, and the great losses already incurred were not realized by the higher commanders; neither was the importance of the three strong points in the German defence understood. At the last moment Lieut.-Colonel Fergusson (11/H.L.I.) requested the brigade commander to be allowed to take his two remaining companies across the northern part of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, now in British hands, and attack Strong Point and Mad Point from the southern flank. This was not, however, thought feasible, and at 12.15 P.M., as ordered, the 9/Scottish Rifles and the two companies of 11/H.L.I. moved forward on their hopeless task, taking with them a few of the remnants of the other two battalions of the brigade which had returned to the front trench. Advancing by rushes, without covering fire, some reached the German wire, only

¹ The roll of the battalion, taken later in the morning, showed as casualties 15 officers and 681 other ranks. The battalion diarist estimates that 85 per cent of the officers and 70 per cent of the men of the three leading companies were lost in the first few minutes of the attack, some from the effects of gas.

to be shot down like their predecessors, and a retirement **25 Sept.** under cover of machine-gun fire was ordered to the original front line, where the brigade was reorganizing. Only on the extreme right a half-company of the 11/H.L.I. reached the centre of Little Willie, which was unoccupied except for wounded of the 26th Brigade, and established itself there.

At 1.30 P.M. Br.-General Scrase-Dickins reported to the 9th Division that the second assault had failed with considerable loss, and that his brigade was, for the moment, unequal to further offensive action. During the afternoon its survivors were reorganized for the defence of the original front line. A communication trench, New Trench, was sapped forward to connect it with the centre of Little Willie, held by the half-company of the Highland L.I.

THE CAPTURE AND LOSS OF PEKIN TRENCH IN THE ENEMY SECOND POSITION

The disaster that had befallen the 28th Brigade, due partly to the failure of the gas but mainly to uncut wire and cross machine-gun fire along the whole front of attack, reacted fatally on the whole operation of the 9th Division, in spite of the success of the 26th Brigade; for the 7/Seaforth and 5/Cameron Highlanders of this brigade, with the three-quarters of the 8/Black Watch which had reinforced them, were compelled to remain throughout the day guarding Fosse 8. Thus the remainder of the brigade, five companies instead of eight, had to carry out their advance on Haisnes, not only in less strength than was intended, but unsupported.

The 8/Gordons and the remaining company of the Black Watch had followed the 7/Seaforths, moved through Big Willie and then past the southern end of the Dump, the only opposition encountered on the way being from forty to fifty Germans who had escaped the notice of the Seaforths in the first assault, and emerged from some deep dug-outs in the front line. They were quickly surrounded and taken prisoner. Soon after 7.30 A.M. the leading companies were up in line with the right of the Seaforths at the junction of Fosse Alley and Slag Alley. Taking some of that battalion forward with them, they moved straight on towards their next objective, the German second position, Pekin Trench, at and south of Haisnes, some thousand yards ahead.

25 Sept. Pekin Trench was only partially dug, but protected by a continuous barbed wire entanglement fifteen yards in breadth, and from every point of it between Cité St. Elie and Haisnes the flat and open ground stretching in front towards Fosse 8 could be swept with fire. No definite effort had been made by the British artillery to prepare this position for assault, and the attempt by this small force to advance against it over a thousand yards of open ground, unsupported on either flank, was in theory to court disaster. Fortunately, however, there were no Germans available to occupy Pekin Trench.¹ The Gordons, with a sprinkling of the Black Watch and the Seaforths, were therefore able to cross the wide expanse of open ground unopposed, and arrived at the wire entanglement at 8.5 A.M. After considerable difficulty they managed to get through this and into Pekin Trench, the German last line of defence, on a front between the Loos—Haisnes and the Auchy—Haisnes roads. No enemy could be seen, and it appeared that Haisnes village could be taken without difficulty. Before moving on, however, Colonel Wright decided to await the arrival of the 7/Seaforths and 5/Camerons, which, having no message to the contrary, he believed to be following close behind in support in accordance with orders. The Seaforths and Camerons had, however, for reasons already explained, to remain to defend Fosse 8.

Major-General Thesiger, the divisional commander, still had at his disposal the 27th Brigade (Br.-General C. D. Bruce) with which to take immediate advantage of the important achievement of the 8/Gordon Highlanders and the very favourable opening it offered. The battalions of this brigade, after assembling in and behind the British second-line defence, Lancashire Trench, between Vermelles and Cambrin, about a mile behind the British front trenches, had moved forward at zero hour along the "Up" communication trenches to the vacated front trenches in the following order: 12/Royal Scots, 11/Royal Scots, 10/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and 6/Royal Scots Fusiliers.

Br.-General Bruce had alternative orders: in the event of the assault of the two leading battalions of the 26th Brigade on Fosse 8 being unsuccessful, he was at once to

¹ The *11th Jäger Battalion*, which had been in support at Haisnes, had already gone forward to the south of Auchy to protect the flank of the gap caused by the break-through at Fosse 8; and the battalion of the *16th Regiment*, in reserve near La Bassée, which was now moving forward to take the place of the *Jäger Battalion* at Haisnes, had not yet arrived.

reinforce them; if all went well, he was to support the 25 Sept. other half of the 26th Brigade in its advance on Haisnes. When, at 8 A.M., reports came back that the Seaforths and Camerons had captured Fosse 8, the task of the 27th Brigade became definite; but there appears to have been a misunderstanding as to the time when the brigade should advance in the event of it having to support the attack on Haisnes. General Thesiger intended the brigade to await his orders, whereas Br.-General Bruce understood that the advance should be begun automatically on his hearing of the success of the assault on Fosse 8. On receipt of the news, therefore, he sent orders to his three leading battalions to deploy on reaching the front trenches—at which the first had just arrived—and advance at once, following each other in the order already settled, and taking as their general direction the tower of Douvrin church that stood up as a landmark on the horizon beyond Haisnes village. He retained the 6/Royal Scots Fusiliers in reserve.

At 9.30 A.M. General Thesiger, unaware of this movement, ordered Br.-General Bruce to send forward two battalions of his brigade to support the attack of the 8/Gordon Highlanders on Haisnes. At 9.41 A.M. General Gough (I. Corps) informed General Thesiger that Cité St. Elie and Hulluch had been captured by the 7th Division,¹ and told him to push forward the whole of his reserve brigade at once and capture Haisnes. Soon after 10 A.M., however, various reports showed the existence of an interval of some half a mile between the left of the 26th Brigade forward at the Corons de Pekin and the right of the 28th back at Strong Point in front of Little Willie, and made obvious the need of retaining a reserve to ensure the safety of Fosse 8. General Thesiger therefore ordered Br.-General Bruce by telephone to attack Haisnes, but with only three battalions, leaving one battalion about Big Willie, southwest of the Dump; and he promised for the attack all the artillery support for which he could arrange. In view of these varying orders, Br.-General Bruce did not alter his original instructions to his battalions, so they advanced

¹ Reports had been sent back to this effect by the leading units of the 7th Division, but, as we have already seen, they were incorrect. Much bitter experience was still needed to demonstrate that the entry of a small group of men into a village or trench did not necessarily mean its capture, and that sometimes a successful party mistook its whereabouts. A comment of the I. Corps "Intelligence" on this day is that once units got away from their trenches, they failed to establish their location accurately with the result that the positions both of our own and the enemy's troops were incorrectly reported.

25 Sept. independently south of the Dump towards Pekin Trench to support the 8/Gordons.

The 12/Royal Scots (Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Loch), the leading battalion, had crossed the British front trench soon after 8 A.M., and, advancing in four lines of companies in extended order, without suffering many casualties, three-quarters of an hour later occupied Pekin Trench with two companies, the other two lying down in the open behind it. The left of the Royal Scots was thus in touch with the 8/Gordons established in the trench opposite Haisnes, and their right was at the junction of Pekin Trench with Cité Trench.

The 11/Royal Scots (under Lieut.-Colonel R. C. Dundas, who was killed during the action), the next battalion, was delayed in moving up to its position in the front line by the stream of wounded and stretcher bearers coming back along the communication trenches; and it was not until after 9 A.M. that it began the advance across No Man's Land. After passing Fosse Alley the two leading companies mistook direction, and inclined too much to the left towards the Haisnes—Auchy road. On reaching this they were fired at from Auchy Cemetery to their left front, and, realizing their error, wheeled to the right astride the road towards Haisnes. A few hundred yards brought them up against a deep entanglement in front of Haisnes Trench, the continuation northwards of Pekin Trench, through which they began to cut a way; but before this could be accomplished, heavy fire was opened on them from Haisnes.¹ Only about a dozen men succeeded in entering the trench, the remainder becoming casualties or retiring towards Fosse 8. The other two companies of the 11/Royal Scots had not made the left-incline, but had continued on the line of Douvrin church tower, and at 11.45 A.M. they reached Cité Trench, extending southwards the line of the 12/Royal Scots and the 8/Gordon Highlanders, without drawing fire from Haisnes. Nevertheless, from this time onwards, there seems to have been no possibility of pressing on beyond the trench, or of seizing Haisnes village.

The 10/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel A. F. Mackenzie), the third battalion of the 27th Brigade, moved off half an hour after the 11/Royal Scots. Skirting the southern end of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, and then crossing Big Willie and the German front defences,

¹ About 11.30 A.M. the reserve battalion of the German *16th Regiment* was beginning to arrive in Haisnes from its rest billets near La Bassée.

the battalion directed its advance on Douvrin church tower. After passing south of the Dump it was heavily shelled by the German batteries in position between Haisnes and Auchy, and a field battery in the open only a thousand yards away, but reached Fosse Alley at midday. Here Colonel Mackenzie learnt that Pekin Trench, for which he was making, was already strongly held, and therefore decided to halt in Fosse Alley until reinforcements were asked for. At 1.30 P.M. a request for assistance was received from Pekin Trench and one company was sent forward; but it was not followed by the others, for in crossing the open ground, it was so heavily shelled that very few of the men reached their destination, and to send others to the same fate seemed to serve no useful purpose.

Soon after midday the advanced position in front of Haisnes, which earlier in the morning had seemed full of possibilities for a further success, became in fact a danger rather than an advantage. To prevent those units of the 26th and 27th Brigades that had gone forward to Pekin Trench from being completely cut off, it was evident to the I. Corps that the position of Fosse 8 must be held at all costs. To reinforce its defenders the 73rd Brigade (24th Division) from general reserve, which General Haig had allotted to the I. Corps during the morning, was at 1 P.M., directed to advance immediately to Fosse 8.¹ In addition, B Battery L. Brigade R.F.A., was sent forward at once to join A Battery LII. Brigade R.F.A. and No. 7 Mountain Battery behind the British original front trenches south-west of the Hohenzollern Redoubt. It was followed shortly afterwards by the remainder of the LII. Brigade R.F.A. and by D Battery LIII. (Howitzer) Brigade R.F.A. All six field batteries, under Lieut.-Colonel A. M. Perreau, came into action here during the afternoon, the last battery arriving about 4.30 P.M.

In the meantime the situation of the troops in Pekin Trench in front of Haisnes with both flanks in the air had become more and more precarious. The German batteries behind and north of Haisnes had got the range of the occupied sector of the trench and began to shell it heavily and continuously. Under cover of this bombardment strong enemy detachments began to bomb along the trench southwards, from the Haisnes—Auchy road, whilst simultaneously smaller parties worked northwards from Cité Trench. In the fighting that continued throughout the

¹ The 73rd Brigade did not, however, arrive until 8 P.M. See Chapter XVI.

25 Sept. afternoon, the British were at a disadvantage and lost heavily. The Ball hand-grenade, a heavy iron sphere as large as a cricket ball, and the extemporized grenades then in use could not be thrown as far as the German stick-grenade. More important still, they were most difficult to set in action, for they had to be ignited either by striking the cap on a wristlet or by a cardboard friction lighter, and most of these accessories had become caked with the chalky mud and were useless.¹ Many of the rifles, too, as elsewhere, had got clogged, the mud quickly hardening in the mechanism of the rifle and making it temporarily unserviceable. So the force which had originally held Pekin Trench on a wide front of some fifteen hundred yards gradually dwindled.

Meantime Br.-General Bruce had gone forward to the Dump, and learning the situation in Pekin Trench had about 1 p.m. ordered up his reserve battalion, the 6/R. Scots Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel H. H. Northey), from the old front line.² He led it to Fosse Alley and sent forward two companies to support the defenders of Pekin Trench. Nevertheless in consequence of there being no effective means of replying to the German bombers, the trench was lost bay by bay, so that by 5 p.m., as dusk fell, only about half-a-mile of it remained in British hands; and it was decided by the senior officers in the trench to abandon the position. The survivors of the 8/Gordons, 12/R. Scots, and 11/R. Scots, some eight hundred in all, with the two companies of the 6/R. Scots Fusiliers, were withdrawn in good order across the open under heavy German artillery fire. The companies of the R. Scots Fusiliers rejoined their battalion, then with the 10/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of their brigade in Fosse Alley, but the other men, though the brigade staff tried to stop them, passed on back to the original German front defences, Dump Trench and Big Willie. Fosse Alley therefore became the British front line in this part of the field, and Br.-General Bruce took up his headquarters about three hundred yards in rear, half-way between the Quarries and Fosse 8. It was already very dark, so that the sorting out of the troops who had come back was difficult and they remained in some confusion throughout the early part of the night.

¹ The German stick-grenade was set in action before throwing by pulling a string.

² Owing to the congestion and mud in the trenches the battalion had taken 4 hours to cover the $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from its assembly place to the front line.

The Germans re-occupied Pekin Trench soon after it was evacuated, bombing their way along it with caution, and taking prisoner a number of wounded whom it had been impossible to remove. For the moment, however, they made no attempt to follow up the British retirement on Fosse Alley. 25 Sept.

At nightfall the situation of the 9th Division was as follows :—

The 27th Brigade with part of the 26th Brigade held Fosse Alley from north of the Quarries, where it was in touch with the left of the 7th Division, to the junction of Fosse Alley with Slag Alley, east of the Dump. The remainder of the 26th Brigade, chiefly Seaforths, Camerons and Black Watch, carried on the line northwards round the Corons de Pekin, their left thrown back facing Madagascar. In the course of the night this part of the brigade was relieved, as will be related, by the 73rd Brigade of the 24th Division and withdrawn into reserve to the front line trenches which it had occupied before the attack.

The 28th Brigade was back in its original trenches except for a small party of its right battalion, the 11/H.L.I. that had established itself in Little Willie, south of Strong Point.

Owing to the fact that the six batteries that had been brought forward during the afternoon to the south-west of the Hohenzollern Redoubt were in an exposed and very cramped position, Br.-General Armitage decided to withdraw them under cover of darkness and orders were issued accordingly to Lieut.-Colonel Perreau. The guns were withdrawn during the night to their original positions north and south of Cambrin. The remainder of the 9th Division artillery had not moved throughout the day from the original battery positions about Cambrin and west of the Vermelles—La Bassée railway; it had had frequent though fleeting targets all day on Germans moving out of Haisnes, but absence of reports as to the position of the British infantry had prevented any real assistance being given.

General Gough, commanding the I. Corps, justly considered that the effect of the achievements both of the 7th and 9th Divisions might have been greatly extended if an infantry division of the general reserve had advanced to support him, as he had been led to expect one would, shortly after the opening of the battle. Most officers who were present shared his opinion. In the course of a sub-

25 Sept. sequent correspondence on the matter he wrote :—" What
" was required was the arrival of three infantry brigades,
" fresh and in good order, (*i.e.* the division of the general
" reserve) at 9 A.M. on the front of the I. Corps; one
" brigade in front of Cité St. Elie, another on the left in
" front of Haisnes and another on the right in front of
" Hulluch. Such a reinforcement would have carried the
" whole of that portion of the German line of defence."
For various reasons that will be discussed later, this
division, the 24th, did not arrive on the battlefield till the
evening, twelve hours after the first assault, and was not
in a position to attack until more than twenty-four hours
had elapsed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

25TH SEPTEMBER (*continued*)

THE ATTACK OF THE I. CORPS (*concluded*)

(Maps 1, 7, 9 ; Sketches A, 27)

2ND DIVISION

THE FAILURE OF THE ATTACK NEAR THE LA BASSÉE CANAL

THE 2nd Division (Major-General H. S. Horne) awoke to a day of tragedy, unmitigated by any gleam of success. Its first task was to form a defensive flank facing north-east, to cover the left of the great assault of the four central divisions. To execute this task its three brigades, all assembled in the front line astride the La Bassée canal, on a frontage of 3,500 yards, were to attack with limited objectives. The 19th Brigade (Br.-General P. R. Robertson)¹ and the 6th Brigade (Br.-General A. C. Daly) between the Vermelles—La Bassée railway and the south bank of the canal, were to advance through Auchy village and the Railway Triangle to the railway line between Haisnes and the canal. The German communication trench, Canal Alley, alongside this railway was then to be converted into a fire trench and occupied as a defensive flank. The 5th Brigade (Br.-General C. E. Corkran) on the north bank of the canal, was to advance to a line through Canteleux and Chapelle St. Roch, the right to prolong the new

Map 9.
Sketches
A, 27.

¹ The 19th Brigade (formed in August 1914 of four battalions allotted to the line of communications) had replaced the 4th (Guards) Brigade in the 2nd Division on 19th August 1915, when the latter brigade departed to join the Guards Division then in process of formation.

25 Sept. line south of the canal, and the left thrown back to join the right of the Indian Corps in the British original front line. The operations were to be assisted by the firing of three mines under the German front trench.

The 2nd Division artillery (Br. - General G. N. Sanders) was organized into three groups for the support of the brigades, with the XLIV. (Howitzer) Brigade R.F.A. reserved for counter-battery work on the whole front of the division.

The ground between the opposing trenches near the canal was, before the battle, less than a hundred yards across; and it was devastated and pitted by a number of mine craters, remnants of the underground warfare of previous months.¹ The two largest of these craters, known as "Vesuvius" and "Etna", had lips over eight feet high, so that a great part of each of the opposing lines was concealed from the other. Owing to the small width of No Man's Land and the possibility of being rushed from the shelter of these mine craters, and of being blown up by mines, the Germans, who held the line opposite the 2nd Division with six battalions, rather stronger than elsewhere,² had evacuated their front trench on both sides of the canal, after levelling its parapet so that it should not impede fire or give cover. They then converted their support trench, a hundred yards behind, into their main fire trench, thus increasing the width of No Man's Land. By this means the defenders secured more time to man their position and a better field of fire, and further escaped much of the effects of the final intense bombardment before the assault. South of the canal, in and near the German defences, were "The Brickstacks", an outlying portion of the La Bassée brickfields between Cuinchy and the Railway Triangle, and in many of the stacks had been constructed concealed concrete machine-gun emplacements which could be manned at a moment's notice from

¹ There had been considerable mine warfare in the area north and south of the canal, conducted on the British side by the 170th, 173rd and 176th Tunnelling Companies R.E. under the C.R.E. of the 2nd Division, Lieut.-Colonel G. P. Schofield, without either belligerent obtaining the upper hand. The 3 Field Companies of the division, the 5th, 11th and 1/1st East Anglian, were affiliated to brigades.

² The section from the Vermelles—La Bassée railway to the canal was held with a battalion of the 16th Regiment in the front defences and the remaining two battalions in support and reserve about the Triangle and La Bassée. This sector of the front was also supported by the 11th Jäger Battalion in Haisnes village. North of the canal was a battalion of the 56th Regiment with the supporting battalion in Canteleux.

shell-proof dug-outs beneath them. Behind the line of 25 Sept. the support trenches the cottages on the western edge of Auchy had been organized as an auxiliary line of defence.

At the first sign of the gas discharge the Germans near the canal had lit fire boxes at twenty-five paces interval all along their parapet. This precaution proved unnecessary. A gentle wind from the south and south-east gradually carried the gas and smoke back into the faces of the British troops assembled in the front trenches, and then past them, so that as zero hour approached, not only were many of the men affected by gas, but there was no smoke cloud to cover the advance across No Man's Land. In forgetfulness of the fact that the earth and debris thrown up by the explosion of a mine only take a few seconds to settle down again, the two mines under the German front trench opposite the 19th Brigade were, by divisional order, fired ten minutes before zero hour, and this put the enemy thoroughly on the alert.¹ There were only narrow gaps between the mine craters through which the attacking troops could pass, and this first cramped and then disorganized the extended lines. The Germans in their eagerness to take advantage of such an easy target could be seen bobbing up to fire breast-high above the parapet of their trench. Some even stood on it, and brought a machine gun into action, and when the artillery lifted at zero they were able to man it practically unmolested.

The attack of the 19th Brigade was led by the 1/Middlesex (Lieut.-Colonel F. G. M. Rowley) and 2/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders ² (Lieut.-Colonel R. C. Gore). The battalions were delayed just as they were about to start by the gas blowing back to their trenches; but they went over the top in splendid order as if at training, although, like all the other British troops on this day, handicapped by their gas helmets, which hindered both sight and hearing. Being without assistance from gas and not covered by smoke, they were met at once by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. The enemy guns were placed low in the parapet, as at the Battle of Festubert, and a high percentage of the wounded were hit in the ankles or in the lower part of the legs. After suffering heavy casualties, both battalions were finally stopped in front of the intact wire entanglement

¹ The charges were 1,000 lbs. of black powder, and they were laid by the 173rd Tunnelling Company R.E.

² Owing to mine craters the Argyll had to dig a jumping-off trench fifty or sixty yards in rear of the British front line, and had many casualties before reaching the latter.

25 Sept. covering the German original front trench, the one gap cut in it by the artillery having been repaired during the night. Although every effort was made by the supporting companies to reinforce and carry forward the advance, the enemy fire was too severe for them to succeed. The machine guns of the Argylls which had been brigaded with the others at the opening of the action to fire over the heads of the attackers to stop enemy reserves coming up, were now brought forward into one of the mine craters, but they were unable to deal with the hidden German guns. The 2/R. Welch Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel O. de L. Williams) sent forward two companies to support the Middlesex with no other result than to incur further losses. At 9 A.M., after consulting all the commanding officers as to the chance of a fresh attack succeeding, Br.-General Robertson decided to break off the operation, and the troops were ordered to withdraw as best they could to their original trenches. The Middlesex, the ground being too open for them to retire, dug in and remained in No Man's Land until dark; the Highlanders mostly managed to get back over the cratered front, but had to leave behind two platoons, who crept forward into the remains of the empty German front trench. Of these, eleven men returned under cover of darkness that evening, the remainder having been killed or taken prisoner during the day.¹

The attack of the 6th Brigade between the 19th Brigade and the canal had an equally unfortunate course. At 5.35 A.M., 15 minutes before the gas discharge was due to begin, the officer of the 186th (Special) Company R.E., in charge of the gas on the 6th Brigade front, considered the wind so unfavourable for its employment that he declined to assume the responsibility of turning on the cylinders. This was reported to 2nd Division headquarters, from which a reply was received that the programme must be carried out whatever the conditions, but that the gas might be turned off if found unsatisfactory. It was nearly 6 A.M. before this order came through and the cylinders were opened accordingly. On the front of the 2/South Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel C. S. Davidson) near the canal, the gas-cloud was so dense that, although wearing smoke-

¹ The casualties, including killed, wounded, gassed and missing were :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
1/Middlesex . . .	16	439
2/Argylls . . .	15	315
2/R. Welch Fus. . .	7	113

helmets all the companies were affected, a large number of men being violently sick and 130 of them unable to take any further part in the day's operations. 25 Sept.

The two leading companies of the 1/King's (Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Potter) on the right managed to reach the first German wire entanglement, but found it unbroken or so little damaged that it absolutely precluded any further advance under fire. At great risk Lieut. J. H. A. Ryan made his way back to inform Colonel Potter that there were ten belts of uncut wire ahead and that it was useless to send the other two companies over. He then returned to be killed with his men.¹ On the front of the South Staffordshire two mines laid by the 170th Tunnelling Company R.E. were exploded under the German front trench two minutes before the assault; but here also, as the Germans were not occupying the trench, the effect on the defence was negligible. So heavy was the fire from the German support trench, now the front line, that the right and centre of the battalion were unable to advance beyond the eastern edges of the mine craters in No Man's Land. The left company, moving along the canal towpath gallantly led by Capt. A. F. G. Kilby, got right up to the wire of Embankment Redoubt. Exposed to a shower of stick-grenades thrown at them from this practically undamaged work, they were unable to enter it in spite of repeated attempts, and only twenty of the company succeeded in getting back to their trenches. In these circumstances, and as no progress had been made north of the canal, no further battalions of the 6th Brigade were engaged.²

On hearing of the failure of the 19th and 6th Brigades, General Horne, at 9 A.M., ordered half an hour's intense artillery bombardment of the German position on the whole front of both brigades, after which the battalions originally in support were to deliver a fresh assault. At 9.10 A.M., however, Br.-General Daly (6th Brigade) reported to the 2nd Division that:—"The gas was a complete failure against the enemy, but our men suffered very heavy casualties and are not in a position to attack again". Twenty minutes later, at the conclusion of the bombardment, the battalion commanders concerned reported that

¹ The casualties of the 1/King's (Liverpool) were 5 officers and 222 other ranks, nearly all in the two leading companies of whom only one officer and a few men returned.

² The casualties of the 2/South Staffordshire were 11 officers and 280 other ranks. Capt. Kilby was reported wounded and missing, and was subsequently presumed dead; he was posthumously awarded the V.C.

25 Sept. the strong points in the German line known to conceal machine guns were still intact, and that in the circumstances any further attempt to push on would be a useless sacrifice of life and could have little chance of success. Br.-Generals Robertson and Daly concurred in this view and reported accordingly to divisional headquarters. After a telephone consultation it was agreed, at 9.45 A.M., that no attack should be made by either the 19th or 6th Brigades until further orders. The failure of the 2nd Division to secure the Brickstacks and ground near the canal, added, as already mentioned, to the difficulties of the task of the 7th and 9th Divisions.

The attack of the 5th Brigade (Br.-General C. E. Corkran), north of the canal, was made at two places half a mile apart, near the canal and near Givenchy. On the right the 1/9th H.L.I. (Glasgow Highlanders) under Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Murray, was to capture the Tortoise Redoubt on the bank of the canal. This redoubt as well as the Embankment Redoubt on the south bank commanded the ground on both sides of the canal, and the capture of the two works was regarded as a necessary preliminary to the 19th and 6th Brigades going forward through Auchy village and the Triangle. The attack of the Glasgow Highlanders was therefore to be delivered at 6.30 A.M., simultaneously with the main assault. An hour before zero the gas officer here also protested against the opening of the cylinders, reporting that he "could not guarantee the effect on enemy or our own men"; but he was ordered by the division to carry on. Shortly before zero hour a dense volume of gas drifted up from the south, collected over the canal and blew across into the front trenches where the men were assembled. Here, too, the gas-helmets did not answer their purpose and the two leading platoons were overcome in spite of the vigorous use of anti-gas sprayers. The next two went forward to take their place, and at 6.40 A.M. moved out into No Man's Land. It was evident that the attack of the 2/South Staffordshire along the railway embankment had failed, and to test the enemy's defence a patrol of volunteers was sent out. It was at once assailed by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from the Tortoise Redoubt, and annihilated before it had gone many yards. The remainder of the battalion was therefore ordered to stand fast.

The left attack of the 5th Brigade, made further north from about Givenchy, was to take the form of a diversion in order to engage the enemy's attention north of the canal,

prior to the main assault south of it. For this reason, it was to be made half an hour before the main assault, the three front-line battalions pressing on eventually to the line Canteleux—Chapelle St. Roch, some eight hundred yards distant. The discharge of gas and smoke, starting at the common hour, 5.50 A.M., therefore lasted only ten minutes. The fumes hung back over the British trenches, but at 6 A.M., two minutes after a mine laid by the 176th Tunnelling Company R.E. had been fired under the German front trench, the three battalions, 2/H.L.I. (Lieut.-Colonel A. A. Wolfe-Murray) on the right, 1/Queen's (Lieut.-Colonel H. St. C. Wilkins) in the centre, and 2/Oxfordshire (Lieut.-Colonel A. J. F. Eden) on the left, advanced across No Man's Land. The assault came as a surprise although it doubtless had the effect of giving the alarm to the Germans on either side of the canal.¹ Advancing in half companies at 50 paces interval, the leading companies were able to reach the German wire with little loss. It had been well cut and they entered the front trench, but as they found this empty they pressed straight ahead towards the support trench, a hundred yards beyond, to which the Germans had previously withdrawn. Half-way to it they came under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire at close range, the enemy having by now manned his position. They were compelled to take cover where they could, mostly by getting into the nearest communication trenches. The Germans then set about bombing along these towards their front line. In the close fighting that ensued the British were as usual at a disadvantage, owing to the difficulties in lighting their grenades: the enemy soon got the upper hand and forced them back not only into the German front trench but across No Man's Land. By 9.40 A.M. the survivors of the three battalions were back in their original front trenches, and the two supporting battalions were not employed to renew the attack. The operations of the 2nd Division had accomplished nothing.²

¹ The history of the *56th Regiment*, p. 107, states that on account of various indications the trench garrison was not "unprepared" for an attack but that the gas was an "absolute surprise".

² The casualties of the 5th Brigade and its attached battalions including killed, wounded, gassed and missing were:—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
2/H.L.I.	8	350
1/Queen's	9	308
2/Oxfordshire	8	270
2/Worcestershire	1	6
1/9th H.L.I.	1	118
1/7th King's	0	17

25 Sept. The failure of the 5th Brigade also involved that of the 58th Brigade (Br.-General D. M. Stuart) on its left. The 19th Division (Major-General C. G. M. Fasken), of the Indian Corps on the left of the I. Corps, had been ordered to co-operate with the 2nd Division by attacking the Rue d'Ouvert as soon as the attack of the 5th Brigade had developed. The 57th Brigade being in Army reserve, and the 58th and 56th in the line, the 56th was ordered to take over part of the 58th Brigade line so that the latter could attack on a front suitable to its strength. At 6.30 A.M. the 9/Welch (Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Young) and 9/R. Welch Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel H. J. Madocks, killed during this action) left their trenches, a message having been received that the 5th Brigade was unopposed, and thick smoke preventing the situation being seen. After an advance of about two hundred yards both battalions were stopped by fire, but soon after 7 A.M. a further message being received from the 5th Brigade asking that the right of the 58th Brigade should push on, the 9/Cheshire (Lieut.-Colonel W. B. Dauntsey) and 6/Wiltshire (Colonel A. G. Jeffreys) were sent up to the front line with a view to reinforcing the attack. The front battalions were however gradually forced back, and soon after noon any further effort was by order abandoned.¹

¹ The casualties of the 58th Brigade were :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
9/R. Welch Fus. . . .	11	240
9/Welch	13	221
9/Cheshire	3	54
6/Wiltshire	5	107

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

25TH SEPTEMBER (*concluded*)

THE SUBSIDIARY ATTACKS, AND RESULTS OF THE DAY

(Map 1 ; Sketches B, 17, 18, 28, 29)

THE SUBSIDIARY ATTACKS : THE ACTIONS OF PIETRE AND BOIS GRENIER, AND THE SECOND ATTACK ON BELLEWAARDE

To distract the enemy's attention from the main battle front and to hold his reserves north of the La Bassée canal, as well as to gain certain local advantages, three so-called subsidiary attacks were organized by the Indian, III. and V. Corps to take place half an hour to two hours before the main assault near Loos. They were little more than feint attacks ; for although it was intended to make use of them, if successful, to increase the extent of the breakthrough south of the canal, should one be effected, they could not be converted into decisive attacks, if the principal one failed ; for there was little artillery ammunition allotted to prepare them and no reserves available to exploit them.

Map 1.
Sketches
B, 17.

ACTION OF PIETRE

The attack by the Indian Corps (Lieut.-General Sir C. A. Anderson),¹ known as the " Action of Pietre ", was delivered at 6 A.M. by its left wing, the Meerut Division (Major-General C. W. Jacob), north of Neuve Chapelle

¹ He had replaced Sir J. Willcocks on the 7th September, being succeeded in the Meerut Division by Major-General C. W. Jacob.

25 Sept. on a front of fifteen hundred yards, against the salient in the German position immediately west of the Moulin du Pietre. If successful it was to push on through Pietre and Bas Pommereau and gain a footing on Aubers ridge. The Lahore Division on the right was to be prepared to attack through the Bois du Biez should the enemy show signs of weakening. A small amount of smoke and gas was released, but the faint wind did not move the cloud along as fast as anticipated, and it somewhat handicapped the two assaulting brigades, the gas causing a certain number of casualties, especially on the right, where the explosion of some gas cylinders by German shells created temporary confusion. The right and centre of the Garhwal Brigade (Br.-General C. G. Blackader), the 2/3rd Gurkha Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel W. R. Brakspear, killed in this action), and the 2/Leicester (Lieut.-Colonel H. Gordon, wounded), nevertheless advanced through the cloud with great dash only to find the German wire insufficiently cut. After a gallant attempt to break through, which entailed severe losses, they were held up in the dykes in front of the German position. The left of the brigade however, the 2/8th Gurkha Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel G. M. Morris, died of wounds), with all five battalions of the Bareilly Brigade (Br.-General C. E. de M. Norie) was more successful. These units stormed the front trench with the bayonet, taking prisoner 8 officers and 202 men of the *13th Regiment*, a unit that had held this same sector during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March. Pressing on and driving before them such Germans as appeared they reached the support trench. Here the Gurkhas halted, but the three leading battalions of the Bareilly Brigade, the 1/4th Black Watch (Lieut.-Colonel H. Walker, mortally wounded), the 69th Punjabis (Major H. H. G. Stansfield, mortally wounded), and the 2/Black Watch (Major A. G. Wauchope), now reinforced by the 33rd Punjabis (Colonel R. T. I. Ridgway, wounded)¹ and the 58th Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel C. E. D. Davidson-Houston, killed), continued the advance up to the Moulin. Efforts to take the buildings however failed. At this juncture, about 9 A.M., the Dehra Dun Brigade (Br.-General W. J. St. J. Harvey) was ordered by General Anderson to go forward through the gap made by the Bareilly Brigade towards the high ground of Aubers ridge.

¹ The 33rd and 69th Punjabis had come from Egypt to replace exhausted units like the 6th Jats and 15th Sikhs, for whom drafts of the right class were not available.

The communication trenches, knee-deep in mud after the heavy rain and traffic, and blocked by prisoners and returning wounded, so much delayed the movement of the Dehra Dun Brigade that the situation had changed before its battalions were able to get forward from their assembly position. The reserves of the Garhwal Brigade were similarly hindered in their attempt to take advantage of the success of the 2/8th Gurkhas. By midday the situation of the Bareilly Brigade, with the two long and comparatively open flanks of the wedge it had driven into the German position, became alarming. Br.-General Norie had no reserve in hand to cope with the danger, for the supporting battalions had taken forward with them most of the parties detailed to consolidate the captured front trench.

A German counter-attack soon developed on both flanks. It was started on the right, parties of bombers working up behind the 2/8th Gurkhas which had lost very heavily and was now only some hundred and fifty strong. Forced to withdraw, it exposed the right of the two Punjabi regiments and the 1/4th Black Watch, which, running short of hand-grenades, had also to fall back after suffering heavy casualties. Similarly the 58th Rifles and the 2/Black Watch, facing the Moulin, despite a gallant effort to hold on, were compelled to retire in order to avoid being cut off. During their withdrawal these troops made repeated efforts to stand, but as no rear line across the captured salient had been prepared for defence, each attempt was outflanked, and the German bombers, as in other parts of the field, being better equipped with grenades than the British, obtained possession of one point after another. By 4 P.M. the last detachments had withdrawn from the German trenches to the original British line.¹ Owing to this general retirement it was decided not to put in the Dehra Dun Brigade.

¹ The total casualties of the Meerut Division, killed, wounded and missing during the 25th, 26th and 27th Sept. were 107 officers, 1,172 British other ranks, and 1,788 Indian other ranks. The bulk of these occurred on the 25th.

Lieut. G. A. Maling, Royal Army Medical Corps, was awarded the V.C. for conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in collecting and treating wounded under heavy shell fire, continuing his work after being stunned by one shell explosion and wounded by another.

Rifleman Kulbir Thapa, 2/8rd Gurkha Rifles, was awarded the V.C. for conspicuous bravery in standing by and bringing in wounded.

ACTION OF BOIS GRENIER

25 Sept. The attack by the III. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir W. P. Pulteney) on the left of the Indian Corps, was carried out, at 4.30 A.M., by the 8th Division (Major-General H. Hudson) without gas, but with smoke to cover the flanks, from the neighbourhood of Bois Grenier (south of Armentières), which gives its name to the action. It was preceded by a bombardment on the previous day and five minutes short, sharp fire.

The general idea of the operation was to push through towards Fournes and eventually affect a junction with the Indian Corps on Aubers ridge. Three battalions of the 25th Brigade (Br.-General R. B. Stephens), the 2/Rifle Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel F. H. Nugent), 2/R. Berkshire (Lieut.-Colonel G. P. S. Hunt), and 2/Lincolnshire (Lieut.-Colonel S. Fitz G. Cox) assaulted the German position on a frontage of 1,200 yards, between Corner Fort and Bridoux Fort, two works in the German front line. The attack started promisingly. The front trench, including both Corner and Bridoux Forts, was carried in the first rush, and 3 officers and 120 men of the *16th Bavarian Reserve Regiment* were taken prisoner. The Lincolnshire, on the left, pressed on and took a considerable length of the support trench. At one part only, a frontage of three hundred yards at the junction of the lines of the Rifle Brigade and the Berkshire, was the attack held up, machine guns in Angle Point, a small work in the front line, repulsing all assaults. After the first rush the Germans on the flanks and in Angle Point maintained a continuous fire on No Man's Land, so that reinforcements with ammunition were unable to cross it. At 1 P.M. a determined counter-attack drove back the Lincolnshire on to Bridoux Fort, and shortly afterwards German bombers forced them back from the captured front trench, the survivors, together with two companies of the 1/R. Irish Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel R. A. C. Daunt), which had come up in support, withdrawing along the dykes to their original starting trenches. By 2 P.M. the position of the Berkshire, now hard-pressed on both flanks, both from Bridoux Fort and Angle Point, also became untenable, and Colonel Hunt ordered them to withdraw to their original trenches. At Corner Fort the right of the Rifle Brigade continued to hold on and beat off several counter-attacks, two trench mortars brought up into the work

assisting greatly in keeping off the German bombers. It was felt, however, that the retention of this isolated position would not be worth the losses it would entail,¹ and at 3.30 P.M. the defenders were ordered to withdraw, the movement being skilfully carried out with little loss.² Advantage had been taken during the attack to dig a new trench, which was completed during the night, across the re-entrant in the British line at this point, thereby reducing the frontage considerably and cutting out a weak point in the sector.

SECOND ATTACK ON BELLEWAARDE

The most extensive and the earliest of the subsidiary attacks, known as the "Second Attack on Bellewaarde", was that undertaken by the V. Corps (Lieut.-General Sir E. H. H. Allenby), of the Second Army, east of Ypres. It was directed on a frontage of 2,000 yards against the German position about Hooze and on Bellewaarde ridge, and was begun at 4.20 A.M.

The right attack astride the Ypres—Menin road was preceded by the successful firing of two pairs of mines³ under the German front trench. Simultaneously with the mine explosion, sections of the 56th and 1/1st Cheshire Field Companies R.E. rushed forward and cut the wire entanglement with gun-cotton.⁴ The attack was launched, without gas or smoke, by the 3rd Division (Major-General J. A. L. Haldane).⁵ South of the road the German front trench was taken in the first rush, but further progress could not be made, and during the afternoon the enemy con-

¹ At 3 P.M. an aeroplane report was received to the effect that enemy reinforcements were going forward on every kind of vehicle from Lille to the threatened front.

² The total casualties of the 8th Division in the day's fighting were 52 officers and 1,283 other ranks.

³ Prepared, under direction of Lieut.-Colonel C. S. Wilson, C.R.E. of the 3rd Division, by the 175th Tunnelling Company R.E., with the assistance of the 9th Brigade Mining Section, under considerable difficulties, many casualties being suffered at the shaft head. The mines, in which gunpowder was used, were run out from a listening gallery, the galleries being 220 and 320 feet long.

⁴ The explosive was used in "Bangalore torpedoes". This torpedo is a 2-inch sheet iron cylinder made in 10 ft. lengths (leading end, centre sections as required, and trailing end). It was pushed into the entanglement, and then fired by a primer in the trailing end.

⁵ In first line were the 1/R. Scots Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel M. E. McConnaghey) of the 9th Brigade; 1/4th Gordon Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel A. Lyon) and 1/Gordon Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel P. W. Brown) of the 8th Brigade (Br.-General A. R. Hoskins); and the 2/South Lancashire (Lieut.-Colonel H. T. Cotton) and 2/R. Irish Rifles (Lieut.-Colonel G. A. Weir) of the 7th Brigade (Br.-General C. Gosling).

25 Sept. centrated a heavy artillery fire on the captured position. This shelling was followed by an advance of strong bombing parties against both flanks, and the trench had perforce to be evacuated. North of the road the efforts of the 7th Brigade to take the ruins of Hooze chateau and force its way into the strong work at the south-west corner of Bellewaarde Lake were unsuccessful, uncut wire and numerous machine guns defeating the successive attempts.

The left attack, made by the 14th Division (Major-General V. A. Couper),¹ gained a footing in the German front trench across Bellewaarde ridge at three different points and in places reached the support trench. Bellewaarde Farm itself was, however, not carried, and the efforts of these isolated parties to bomb the Germans out of the intervening parts of the line had not been successful before the Germans delivered a strong counter-attack. This bore hardest on the 9/Rifle Brigade near Railway Wood, and in spite of the support of the 9/K.R.R.C. (Lieut.-Colonel G. J. Davis), the Rifle Brigade was forced back to its original trenches, only retaining possession of the crater of the mine that had been sprung just before the attack. This initial success enabled the Germans to concentrate on the parties of the other two battalions which had established themselves further south, and ultimately these, after being subjected to a further artillery bombardment, were compelled to withdraw.² Two officers and 189 other ranks belonging to units of the *246th Reserve*, *248th Reserve* and *172nd Regiments* were taken prisoner in the first assault, but by the end of the day no gain of ground could be reported.

All three subsidiary attacks had thus ended with the assaulting troops back in their original trenches, mainly because the British hand-grenades were inferior both in quality and number to those of the enemy. No German reinforcements other than local supports had been required to meet them and they therefore had not the desired influence on the main battle south of the La Bassée canal.

¹ In first line were the 5/Shropshire L.I. (Lieut.-Colonel O. C. Borrett) the 5/Oxford and Bucks L.I. (Major W. F. R. Webb) and the 9/Rifle Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel W. D. Villiers-Stuart).

² The total casualties during the day's fighting were :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
3rd Division . . .	78	1,975
14th „ . . .	54	1,747

For repeated acts of conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty under heavy bombardment on the 25th September and days following, until he was mortally wounded on the 1st October, 2/Lieut. R. P. Hallows, 4/Middlesex, was awarded the V.C.

THE RESULTS OF THE 25TH SEPTEMBER

In spite of the fact that the artillery available was inadequate to destroy or neutralize the many enemy strong points and machine-gun emplacements, and to flatten out the parapets, and failed even to cut sufficient lanes in the wire—processes only possible with ample ammunition in the attacks of the later years of the war—a number of the leading battalions of the assaulting divisions, aided by the effect of gas and smoke, broke through the German front position at various parts of the line. The initial success of the 25th September was ample demonstration that the plans of the commander of the First Army were not altogether founded on vain hopes. The 47th Division had experienced no great difficulty in forming the defensive flank that was desired, facing Lens; the 15th Division had captured the defences of Loos, passed through the village and not only obtained possession of Hill 70, but pressed on beyond it, although unfortunately in the wrong direction; the 1st and 7th Divisions had reached the Lens—La Bassée road; the 9th Division had captured the Hohenzollern Redoubt, Fosse 8 and the Dump near by, and had actually broken into the German second position opposite Haisnes. Only the units of the 2nd Division, owing to extremely adverse conditions, had failed in their operation and had been obliged to return to their original trenches; all the other divisions had gained possession of the German first position and advanced beyond it.

The Royal Flying Corps was not able to render much assistance on the 25th September. Poor visibility due to rain and mist hampered air observation, and although the pilots flew low the smoke cloud combined with the smoke of artillery fire to prevent them from gaining any useful information of ground movements. No reports of the progress of the infantry were sent in¹; some work for the artillery was done, but owing to the information received

¹ A Flying Corps officer who accompanied the infantry with ground strips and lamps to signal to an aeroplane specially detailed for the purpose of reporting the progress of the advance, sent back only three messages in all; one each on the 25th, 27th and 28th September, on which date he was wounded. These appear to be the only reports received from the air with regard to the infantry advance.

During the course of the battle 92 bombing trips were made and the total of bombs dropped was:—100-lbs., 82; 20-lbs., 168; and incendiary, 26.

25 Sept. being conflicting many battery commanders declined to fire on targets indicated from the air. Bombing of the enemy communications was attempted and two trains were hit and damaged.

Whether in view of the failure of the subsidiary attacks and of the naval and Belgian demonstrations on the coast ¹ to hold or draw off enemy reserves, and that of the French Tenth Army to do more than gain possession of a portion of the German first line with part of its left wing,² the British First Army could, if supported, have achieved an important success, is a speculation which admits of no definite conclusion. It must however be remembered that the advance of General Haig's divisions over the first German position was made very early in the day, when the whole French Tenth Army, which did not assault until 6½ hours later, was in hand. A further advance of the British might have caused the withdrawal of the enemy from the French front. The Germans were on the run, and it seemed only to require another vigorous push to clear them from their second position. The British IV. and I. Corps had, in accordance with Lord Kitchener's wishes, attacked vigorously and gone "all out" in the first rush, retaining no reserves, and they had suffered heavy losses. Fresh troops were required, close up and ready to press on at once, in order to reap the fruits of the first successes. Few reserves were available, as the extension of the British line so constantly demanded by our

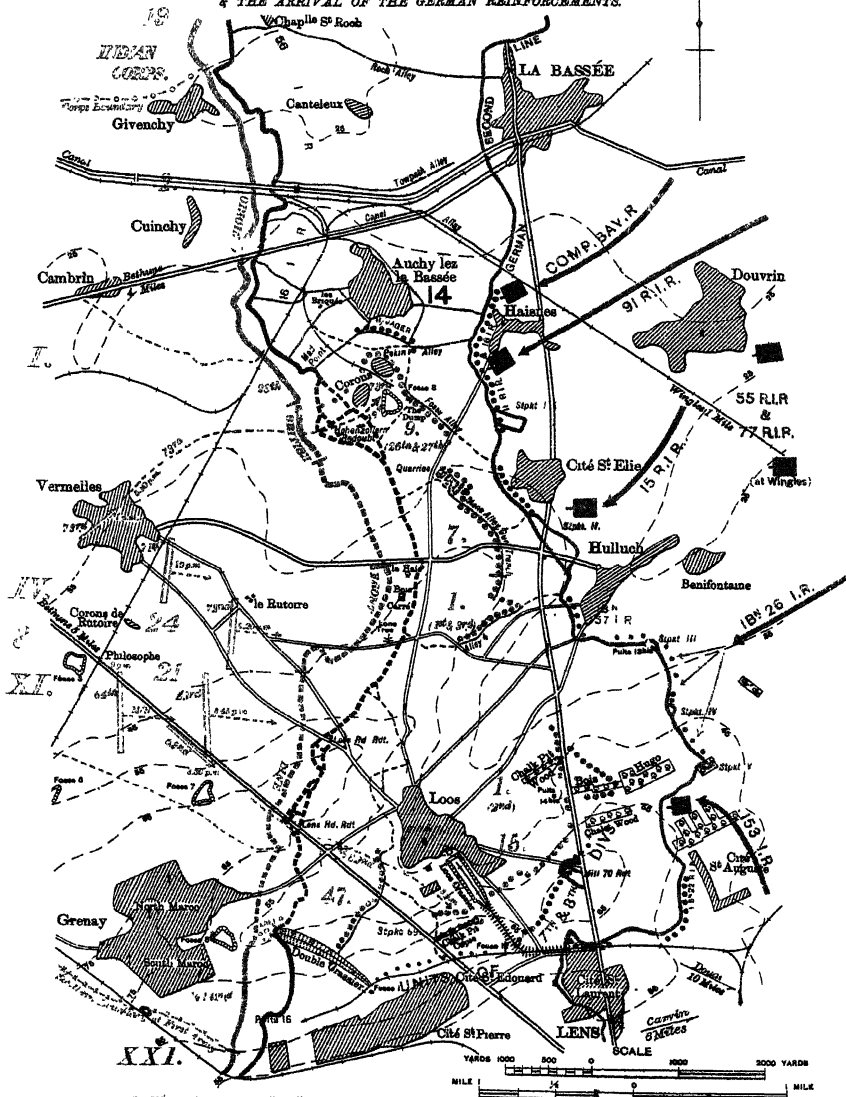
Sketch
29.

Allies had swallowed up divisions as fast as they arrived; but there were three divisions in general reserve, and General Haig had, with Sir John French's knowledge, planned his attack on the understanding that they would be at hand and placed at his disposal whenever wanted. Unfortunately the Commander-in-Chief held them too far behind the front; so the attack that opened with such brilliant promise, came to a standstill, and the enemy recovered from his first surprise. Better equipped with hand-grenades than the British, he was able merely by bombing to dispossess them of much of their hard-won gains, particularly of their footing in the second position

¹ Fire had been directed by Rear-Admiral Bacon's flotilla against the coast from Knocke to Blankenberghe and against Westende and Middlekerke. Bad weather prevented a repetition of the attack on the following days until the 2nd October when another demonstration was made. "Naval Operations", iii. pp. 152-3. For the Belgian operations see Note III. at end of Chapter.

² See Note I. at end of Chapter.

LOOS THE BRITISH LINE AT NIGHT-25TH/26TH SEPTEMBER, THE ADVANCE OF THE RESERVES-11TH & 94TH DIVISIONS, & THE ARRIVAL OF THE GERMAN REINFORCEMENTS.



The 3rd Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 1st Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 2nd Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 3rd Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 4th Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 5th Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 6th Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 7th Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 8th Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 9th Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)
 10th Bn 1st Cavalry Division (1st & 2nd Bns)

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th
 Divisions 1, 2, etc.; Infantry Bns 20th, 21st, etc.
 Divisional Boundary ---
 British as Night-25th/26th SEPTEMBER

Heights in metres

Ordnance Survey 1885

opposite Haisnes. When night fell the First Army, instead of being in old-established continuous trenches covered by wire, was in extemporized positions broken by gaps. Worse than this, it was much exhausted by fighting and had suffered very heavy casualties, amounting in total to 470 officers and 15,000 other ranks, nearly a sixth of its forces engaged.

It still had the strong German second position in front of it, and obviously, even if immediately reinforced by three divisions, could not expect to accomplish much more. Nevertheless Sir John French, with a reserve in hand, was desirous of continuing the battle, and when General Foch declared his intention of so doing, there was indeed no alternative. The French attack, both in number of men and weight of guns and ammunition available, was the main effort, to which the British was subordinate. Perhaps both commanders were too far from the field to realize what had actually occurred.

NOTE I

THE ATTACK OF THE FRENCH TENTH ARMY

There being a passive front held by a Territorial division, opposite Map 1. Lens, between the left of the French Tenth Army and the right of Sketch the British First Army, nothing could be seen of the operations of 18. the French during the fighting. Little information about them was received at British G.H.Q. during the 25th September. At 10 A.M. after the initial British success had been notified to General d'Urbal, Captain L. J. Spears, the liaison officer with him, reported that the hour of the French assault had in consequence been advanced from 1 P.M. to 12.25 P.M. The next piece of information was that the French had everywhere crossed the enemy's front line, but had subsequently fallen back, except the XXI. Corps on the left, which had not only maintained its position but had gained some ground.

The following details have been extracted from the official account of the French operations.¹

From first to last there was "determination (*ferme volonté*) to "obtain an important success". When the problem of the offensive of the Tenth Army was put before him, General d'Urbal considered that it should take the form of a series of preliminary actions, followed by the main attack. He wished first to secure the "keys of the doors of the position", the village of Souchez and the "Labyrinthe", a strong work in the German front line 3 miles north of Arras, much like the Hohenzollern Redoubt. These in French hands, he proposed 48 hours later to attack and occupy the crest of Vimy ridge.

General Foch's ideas did not coincide with those of General

¹ It should be noted that in the French account, contrary to British practice, the front is described from left to right.

25 Sept. d'Urbal, and he directed the Tenth Army "to aim beyond a mere tactical success, at a strategic break-through capable of producing decisive results, by pushing its mass rapidly in the direction of Douai. In consequence, the offensive should from the beginning be conducted with the greatest vigour, and continued without interruption in the form of a violent thrust (*poussée*), with the object of reaching its final objective without stopping to widen the breach by turning to the right and left. All the infantry and cavalry, followed closely by the artillery, are to be employed without reserve, except those strictly necessary to occupy the captured position." He gave as the preliminary objective the high ground near Angres, Souchez village, and the crest of Vimy ridge, and the line Beaurains—Blairville Wood.

General d'Urbal gave way, and submitted his orders in this sense for General Foch's approval. Considering the reserves, the 130th Division and I. Cavalry Corps, insufficient, General Foch obtained from French G.Q.G. two additional divisions, the 58th and 154th. It was also decided to allot to the Tenth Army more heavy artillery and "heavy artillery ammunition in much greater quantity than in previous battles". The strength of the Tenth Army on the 25th September was 17 Active and 2 Territorial divisions; 670 field guns with 1,200 rounds per gun; and 420 heavy guns, with a total of 260,000 rounds of gun ammunition available.¹

The reserves were brought up close to the front, as General d'Urbal was of opinion, and General Foch agreed, that the inability to exploit the successes of the 9th May and 16th June in the Second Battle of Artois had been due to the "reserves being too far back, or employed piece-meal".

The German defences opposite the French were organized in the same way as in front of the British, in two positions strengthened by strong points; but there was this difference—that the second position was near the edge of Vimy ridge, and, this captured, the French would be in a commanding position to support a further advance by artillery. The British Third Army on the right of the French Tenth Army arranged to assist the IX. Corps with artillery, but General Monro was forbidden by Sir John French to engage any of his infantry.

By General Foch's orders, the French infantry was "not to assault until four hours after the moment when observation of fire on the German second position should become possible." Visibility being sufficient at 7 A.M., the commander of the Tenth Army decided that the infantry attack should be begun at 12.45 P.M.² [This was somewhat late to take advantage of the British successes between 7 and 8 A.M.]

"At the instant ordered the French troops left their trenches on the whole front."

The success of the French offensive was very small. To quote the official account:—

"The results obtained at the end of the day on the 25th may be summed up as follows: Insignificant on the right of the Tenth

¹ The British First Army (I. and IV. Corps) engaged in the main assault consisted of 6 divisions, with 416 field guns and 117 heavy guns. See pages 174-5.

² This differs from the time given to the British liaison officer, viz. 12.25 P.M.

"Army, slight (*peu marqués*) in the centre, where only certain 25 Sept.
 "pieces of the enemy first line were captured, but very satisfactory
 "on the left, where the 70th Division and the XXI. Corps reached
 "nearly all their objectives. On the other hand the British offensive
 "had been very successful" (*très bien réussie*).

The details of the fighting, given corps by corps hardly bear out even this modest claim. The official account as regards the XXI. Corps, nearest the British First Army, is translated below in full, and is summarized as regards the others.

"North of Arras the XXI. Corps had as its first objectives the Map 1.
 "Bois en Hache [midway between Souchez and Angres] 300 yards Sketch
 "from the French front, Bois 2 and the Souchez railway halt [north- 18.
 "west of the village]; as ultimate objectives, Angres and the Bois
 "de Givenchy [1000 yards beyond Souchez]. The passive part of
 "the corps front was held by the 81st Territorial Division, which
 "ensured liaison with the British First Army; it was to limit its
 "action to demonstration by fire. The attack was carried out by
 "two divisions side by side, the 43rd Division on the left against
 "the Bois en Hache, the 13th on the right against Bois 2 and the
 "railway halt. General Maistre kept in corps reserve one infantry
 "regiment, and one *chasseur à pied* battalion.

"The left of the 43rd Division was stopped by flanking fire from
 "the Angres area; its centre got possession of the Bois en Hache;
 "its right pushed on as far as the Souchez stream, but was driven
 "back slightly at the end of the day. At night the enemy retook
 "the Bois en Hache by a counter-attack. The 13th Division took
 "Bois 2 and the Souchez halt in its first rush and reached Souchez.
 "The XI. Corps reported on the morning of the 26th more than
 "350 prisoners."

The left and centre of the XXXIII. Corps (General Fayolle), the 70th and 77th Divisions, captured the enemy's first line; the right, the 55th Division, was stopped dead by fire.

In the III. Corps (General Hache), opposite Petit Vimy and Vimy village, the 6th and 5th Divisions attacked side by side. Part of the 6th Division gained the enemy front trench, but "succeeded
 "in retaining only a small piece (*faible partie*) of it". The 5th Division fared worse, its left and centre reached the enemy front trench, "but could not be supported, and were driven back or
 "destroyed. Its right gained only a very little ground." At 3.30 p.m., under the misapprehension that the edge of Vimy plateau had been won, General d'Urbal ordered up the I. Cavalry Corps, and placed the 130th Division, then four miles in rear, at General Hache's disposal; but, owing to the bad state of the ground and the enemy fire, the head of the division had not reached the front trenches by 5 p.m., and it was not engaged.

In the XII. Corps (General Descoings) immediately north of Arras, the 24th and 23rd Divisions captured part of the enemy front line, but retained of it only the work known as the Labyrinthe, in the centre.

The XVII. Corps (General J. B. Dumas) in front of Arras, attacked with the 34th Division north and the 38rd Division south of the town, part of the 88th Territorial Division holding the passive front between them. After a slight success, both divisions were driven back to their own front line.

In the IX. Corps (General Curé), whose right, next the British

25 Sept. Third Army, was passive and held by part of the 88th Territorial Division, the 18th, 17th and 152nd Divisions—only two regiments were held in corps reserve—were stopped by intact or only partly destroyed wire and heavy machine-gun fire, and driven back.

At 8 P.M. General Joffre requested General Foch to inform him of his impressions of the day and his projects for the morrow, and further enquired what divisions could be spared for Champagne if it seemed impossible that decisive results could be obtained in Artois. The commander of the Group of Armies of the North considered that the struggle should be continued with all the means at his disposal in order to exploit the success obtained by the British and the French left. Towards 9 P.M. he called General d'Urbal to St. Pol and gave him the following instructions: "The Tenth Army will support the action of the British First Army by attacking with the XXI., XXXIII., III. and XII. Corps and making its principal effort on the left; for this purpose the 154th Division will be brought up in rear of the XXI. and XXXIII. Corps. South of Arras the XVII. and IX. Corps will suspend their attacks."

General Foch then proceeded to Lillers to see Sir John French, who told him of his intention to continue the offensive on the 26th. General Foch thereupon, at 11 P.M., addressed a note to French G.Q.G. reporting the situation and stating that "the happy situation of our left, combined with the British advantages, allows us to hope that we shall reach Point 119, Point 140 and La Folie," that is the crest of Vimy ridge.

General d'Urbal ordered the resumption of the action on the 26th on the lines indicated to him, but only after a serious artillery preparation, and he postponed fixing the hour of the assault until this should have been carried out. He then sent a congratulatory letter to General Haig, in which he said:

"La X^{me} Armée a progressé aujourd'hui assez sensiblement sur sa gauche. Je compte continuer l'attaque demain matin sur tout mon front."

NOTE II

THE CHAMPAGNE BATTLE OF THE FRENCH SECOND AND FOURTH ARMIES

Sketch The general results on the 25th September of the battle in 18. Champagne, although they at first appeared very favourable, were very similar to those in Artois. Twenty divisions in front line of the French Second Army (General Pétain) and Fourth Army (General de Langle de Cary) of General de Castelnau's Group of Armies, attacked at 9.15 A.M.—that is 3½ hours earlier than General d'Urbal's troops—on a front of about 1,500 to 2,000 yards per division. Seven more divisions followed in the second line, and one, with six cavalry divisions, was in reserve. Opposite the French front were six German divisions, with two defensive positions as in Artois. The weather was good up to the night of the 24th/25th and permitted of a bombardment considered satisfactory, but it then changed and heavy rain fell, and continued until midday on the 25th.

The enemy's first position was broken through at four places, the successes being reckoned by the French official account as "two very important, which brought us in contact with the German

"second position", one "fairly serious" (*assez sérieuse*), and one 25 Sept. slight (*légère*). Intact wire prevented the French from entering the second position. Fourteen thousand prisoners and some guns were captured, but very heavy losses sustained. The Germans in anticipation of the attack, the preparations for which had been plainly visible, had withdrawn the greater part of their artillery behind the second position, with the definite intention of making their principal defence there. A subsidiary attack by the Third Army (General Humbert) on the Aisne front had no success.

General Joffre, on the reports that he received, considered that the results obtained seemed capable of exploitation, and allotted two reserve divisions to General de Castelnau; and, the expenditure of ammunition having been very considerable, ordered General Dubail, commanding the Group of Armies of the East, to send to General de Castelnau all the 75 ammunition that he had over and above 500 rounds per gun. Both General Pétain and General de Langle de Cary issued orders for the resumption of the battle early on the 26th.

NOTE III

THE BELGIAN DEMONSTRATION ON THE 25TH SEPTEMBER

During the period dealt with in this volume, there was a state of trench warfare on the Belgian front, and no infantry attack of importance took place. The front still ran behind the Ypres canal and the Yser from Steenstraat to St. Georges near Nieuport, with the French XXXVI. Corps (General Hély d'Oïssel) in the coastal sector.

On being informed on the 15th September by General Foch of the Allied plans for an offensive, the Belgian High Command engaged to develop the greatest possible activity on its front on the day of attack, to prepare the two Belgian cavalry divisions to act in co-operation with the French XXXVI. Corps, and to make the necessary preparatory dispositions for a general advance of the Belgian army, so that no time should be lost if the enemy fell back.

In fulfilment of this, the cavalry was relieved of trench duty on the 22nd, and on the 25th the 1st Division behind the Ypres canal simulated attempts to cross, and the 2nd, 3rd and 6th Divisions executed a series of raids, whilst the artillery bombarded the German batteries and positions.

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CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH/26TH SEPTEMBER

THE ADVANCE OF THE GENERAL RESERVE AND THE SITUATION OF THE XI. CORPS ON THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH/26TH SEPTEMBER

(Maps 1 and 8 ; Sketches A, B, 17, 28, 29, 30)

THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE GENERAL RESERVE

Map 8. **Sketches**
B, 17. The general reserve, at the direct disposal of the British Commander-in-Chief, had been assembled in readiness for the battle in the area north and south of Lillers. It consisted of the Cavalry Corps (1st, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions), which had been for some time in the area, about Théroutanne (11 miles north-west of Lillers), and the XI. Corps (Guards, 21st and 24th Divisions),¹ which marched to it from the divisional concentration areas west of St. Omer, where the Guards Division had been formed and trained and where the 21st and 24th Divisions had assembled on arrival from England. The advance of the XI. Corps was begun on 20th September, the 21st Division marching in one column from villages north-west of St. Omer by the main road via Aire, and the 24th from villages some fifteen miles south-west of St. Omer, in three columns directed eastward. The Guards Division, from an area between St. Omer and the 24th Division, followed in several columns a day later. The movement was carried out at night between the hours of 6 P.M. and 5 A.M. in order to avoid enemy aeroplane observation, the troops resting in billets during the day. On each of the first two nights, which

¹ See Note I. at end of Chapter, which illustrates the difficulties under which these two new divisions were organized.

were hot and oppressive, over twenty miles were covered, 24 Sept. and on the third (22nd/23rd) the 21st and 24th Divisions, their routes crossing, arrived south and north of Lillers, respectively, where they rested until the evening of the 24th. The Guards Division was billeted west of the town. The 3rd Cavalry Division,¹ allotted to the First Army as Army cavalry, moved to the Bois des Dames (4 miles W.S.W. of Béthune). The remainder of the Cavalry Corps was concentrated closely round Théroouanne.

An understanding, although not a satisfactory one, had been arrived at between Sir John French and General Haig, whose Army was to fight the main battle, as to the employment of the general reserve. It was to remain under the former's personal command, and he would put it under General Haig's orders as soon as he considered it was required. In a G.H.Q. letter dated the 7th August the G.O.C. First Army was informed: "The troops available for the operations will be those of your own Army, plus the Cavalry Corps and two divisions held in general reserve under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief". At a conference with General Foch, on the 26th August, at which General Haig was present, Sir John French stated that eight British divisions would be employed in the main attack, "comprising six divisions for the assault and two divisions in general reserve". He subsequently told General Haig to make his plan of attack on the understanding that two divisions of the general reserve would be at hand and placed at his disposal when required. In his plan of operations issued on the 28th August, General Haig included therefore two divisions of the XI. Corps as part of the organization of the First Army for the offensive: in fact, he regarded these two divisions as an immediate reserve to the I. and IV. Corps. Relying on this, and in view of Lord Kitchener's directions to "act vigorously", he had, with Sir John French's approval, placed all the six divisions of those two corps in the front line of assault without retaining any corps or Army reserves, and he had assured his corps and divisional commanders that ample reserves would be ready immediately behind them to carry on the advance. The matter appeared to be absolutely settled when on the 12th September General Joffre, apparently having some inkling of Sir John French's intentions, put on paper that if he kept his reserve divisions

¹ 6th and 8th Cavalry Brigades and divisional troops; the 7th Cavalry Brigade was sent to the Second Army.

18 Sept. too far back "they would run the risk of arriving too late to exploit the success of the leading ones. It is indispensable that these divisions are put, *before the attack*, at the absolute disposal of General Haig."

It was not until the 18th September, during a further conference at St. Omer, that the fundamental difference between the views of Sir John French and General Haig revealed itself. Although the Field-Marshal had passed on to the First Army Lord Kitchener's instructions to "act with all energy . . . even though by so doing we may suffer very heavy losses", there was always borne in his mind the conviction of the insufficiency of men, guns and gun ammunition, and the idea of not committing his troops too deeply and keeping the raw divisions out of the battle if the operations opened unfavourably. On the other hand if they went well he cherished the hope of using the general reserve under his direct orders to administer the "coup de grâce".¹ He now announced that the number of troops already at General Haig's disposal was sufficient to carry out the initial assault and secure any localities won, and that he had decided to keep the whole of the general reserve near Lillers. General Haig expressed the view that the Lillers area, more than sixteen miles by

¹ Sir John French's attitude at one time towards the employment in the field of inexperienced divisions, such as the 21st and 24th, is reflected in a memorandum with regard to the new Armies written by him to the War Office early in the year (3rd January 1915) :—"The experience I have gained during the war leads me to a very decided conclusion that it would not be advisable to organize troops so raised and so trained, and having only such officers and staff as are available, in any higher units than brigades; at any rate until some time after they have joined the forces in the field and gained considerable experience. I will go further, and say that a large proportion of the troops would be most usefully employed as battalions.

"I feel quite sure that to put an Army, corps, or even a division, composed of these troops, and organized in the manner proposed, straight into the field under commanders and staff who are inexperienced in up-to-date European warfare might easily become a positive danger."

In September 1915, however, he considered that new divisions fresh from training in open warfare would be better for the pursuit following upon a successful assault than more seasoned troops that had become "sticky" and disinclined to push forward, on account of the "trench habit".

After the battle of Loos several of the new divisions in France were stiffened by some of their battalions being exchanged for battalions of the Regular Army. Thus the 17th Brigade of the 6th Division took the place of the 71st Brigade in the 24th Division and then exchanged one battalion with each of the 72nd and 73rd Brigades. In the 62nd, 63rd and 64th Brigades of the 21st Division, one battalion each was exchanged, the 1/Lincolnshire and 4/Middlesex from the 3rd Division, and 1/East Yorkshire from the 6th Division, being received in their place. Similarly the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 8th Divisions made exchanges with the 33rd, 25th, 32nd, 80th and 23rd Divisions.

road behind the British front near Vermelles, was too distant 18 Sept. from the battle to permit the intervention of the divisions of the XI. Corps in time to reap the result of any initial success. He was supported by General Foch who suggested that the reserve should be about 2000 metres ($1\frac{1}{4}$ miles) behind the corps reserves. As there were no corps reserves there was all the more reason for the general reserve to be close up. The commander of the First Army drew the attention of Sir John French to the fact that the plan of operations of the First Army had been based on the assumption that at least two divisions of the general reserve would be close at hand, and that if held at Lillers they would not be able to reach the battlefield until the evening of the day of assault at the earliest. The experience of offensive battles, for instance Neuve Chapelle and Festubert, had, he said, demonstrated how quickly troops become exhausted, and how soon fresh divisions were required to carry the attack forward; it had further shown the need for taking immediate advantage of the first success, and the probability that, unless the reserves could be brought on to the battlefield within three hours, the Germans would have time to man their rear defences and bring the advance to a standstill.¹ He therefore urged Sir John French to move forward two divisions of the XI. Corps, so that they might be deployed in rear of Vermelles, some two thousand yards behind the assaulting divisions, by daybreak on the day of the infantry attack.² Thus placed they would be able to press the advantage gained by the first assault and confirm any success achieved by the I. and IV. Corps. Sir John French merely said that he did not agree, and—as Commander-in-Chief—would keep the whole of the general reserve in the Lillers area until the battle had sufficiently developed to enable him to decide if and where it was needed. In his formal orders, however, issued that night,³ as if to clinch the matter and give assurance that the general reserve would be brought up to give all the drive that would be necessary, he said: "Once the enemy's defences have been pierced . . . the offensive must be

¹ General d'Urbal had expressed a similar opinion. See page 268.

² This was also the view of General Haking, commanding the XI. Corps. It seemed possible to him that a gap might occur between the IV. and I. Corps which might have to be filled by the XI.; he therefore wished to have his divisions actually deployed into line on the front Mazingarbe—Vermelles in the early morning. On the other hand he knew the Commander-in-Chief's intention that the XI. Corps should be held in G.H.Q. reserve up to the last moment: his position was a most embarrassing one.

³ Appendix 15.

19 Sept. "continued with the utmost determination directly to the front . . .".

On the day following the conference, the 19th September, General Haig wrote formally repeating his request for the assembly of the general reserve nearer the battle front, and asking that "the heads of the two leading divisions of the XI. Corps should be on the line Noeux les Mines—Beuvry [that is 4-5,000 yards behind Vermelles] by daylight on 25th September", of course rested and ready to move off. That same evening Sir John French replied:—"Two divisions of the XI. Corps will be assembled in the area referred to in your letter by daybreak on the 25th September". From this, the last communication on the subject prior to the battle, General Haig, in default of any qualification in the answer, concluded that his views had prevailed; that the 21st and 24th Divisions would be at his disposal immediately the assault began; and that Sir John French intended to retain only the Guards Division and the Cavalry Corps as a final reserve. Such, however, was not the case. Sir John French had agreed to move the 21st and 24th Divisions nearer the battle front in order to be able to take advantage of any local advance, but he still intended to keep the entire XI. Corps intact in his own hands until the situation had developed.¹

Sir John French's final instructions to the general reserve were that by daybreak on the 25th, the heads of the 21st and the 24th Divisions should be at Noeux les Mines and Beuvry, respectively, with the Guards Division a short march in rear, in the area south of Lillers. Behind the Guards, the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions were to be ready to push through a breach in the enemy lines either on the British or on the French front of attack.

During the 24th the divisional, brigade and unit commanders of the Guards, 21st and 24th Division had been warned by the G.O.C. XI. Corps at a conference that they might be cut off from their transport and might not see their "cookers" until the night of the 26th/27th; that to bridge the interval packs and greatcoats were to be

¹ The reason given in Sir John French's despatch of the 15th October 1915 is: "In view of the great length of line along which the British troops were operating, it was necessary to keep a strong reserve in my own hand. The XI. Corps . . . was detailed for this purpose."

General Haig's views as to the allocation of the XI. Corps are reflected in the operation orders of the assaulting divisions of the First Army: *e.g.*, 47th Division operation orders (see Appendix 19), stated that "the 3rd Cavalry Division and the XI. Corps are in Army reserve". In reality only the 3rd Cavalry Division (less one brigade) was in First Army reserve.

carried on the person and also rations, viz. one iron ration, 24 Sept. one extra cheese ration, a haversack portion of bread and cheese, and one ration of pea soup. They were further warned to be careful of the food, as there might be difficulties about getting up rations.

At dark, 7 P.M., on the 24th, the final march of the XI. Corps towards the battle front was begun. The events of this night-approach affected the troops concerned in no small degree. The intention was to give the 21st and 24th Divisions a good night's rest before the battle, and, as only seven to eleven miles—normally a matter of three to four hours by night—separated them from their final assembly position, this seemed quite feasible. The march, however, was much interrupted and proved a most tedious one, taking six or seven hours for even the leading units to accomplish. The 21st Division moved by various narrow side roads to Place à Bruay (a mile north-east of the centre of Bruay), and thence in one column on a fair road allotted to motor traffic¹ to Noeux les Mines; the 24th Division by two narrow roads² to the north-west corner of Béthune, thence through the western and southern suburbs of the town on a motor route to Beuvry.

The commander of the XI. Corps, in a subsequent report on the march of the two divisions, wrote:—"I am of opinion that the delay was caused chiefly by their own indifferent march discipline,³ especially as regards first-line transport. These divisions only received their transport just before leaving England, the drivers were not well trained⁴ and the march discipline of these new divisions, though good when marching without transport,

¹ Via Labuissière and Four à Chaux (south of Houchin). For an account of the traffic control see Note II. at end of Chapter.

² L'Eclème, Gonnehem, Chocques and Vendin lez Béthune, and Busnes, Laleau, Marquois and Vendin lez Béthune. (Not on any map supplied with this volume. See 1/100,000 Map, Hazebrouck sheet.)

³ This does not signify that "discipline" in the ordinary sense of the word was indifferent. Bad "march discipline" means that units failed to keep their exact place in the column of march—either lagged behind as a whole, or opened out to more than their proper length—and that the column did not keep closed to the right (in France) of the road, and occupied more width of road than was due. March discipline was a special feature of the original Expeditionary Force, and the new divisions, in this respect at least, did not as a rule, fall behind the high standard set.

⁴ The transport was received at the end of July.

The diary of one unit records that it was held up one hour and forty minutes, as the horses of the first-line transport in front of it could not get up a slight hill. A succession of night marches is more fatiguing to animals than to men, as the former rarely rest properly in daylight, and this may account for some of the transport troubles.

24/25 " was certainly not good when marching with it, and Sept. " constant halts and checks occurred."

This condemnation, according to a consensus of opinion of participants in, and spectators of, the march, is too sweeping, and as the Guards Division suffered the same checks and halts when marching up on the 26th,¹ some other cause must be sought. There had been little to complain of in regard to march discipline on the previous nights when the roads in the back areas traversed were clear, and the men were fresh; and the divisions had done much marching, although only by day in England. The real cause of the delay and opening out of units on this occasion seems to have been the holding back of the divisions until the very eve of the battle, and then sending them up, although the road system was inadequate to accommodate them in addition to the abnormal traffic at such a time, thus creating a condition of affairs which no "road control" could overcome. On the narrow roads the troops found motor and horsed vehicles moving in the opposite direction and had to force their way past them. For instance, the Gonnehem—Chocques road, marked as a "Down" road but used by the 24th Division as "Up", was only three or four feet wider than a column of fours, with a deep ditch on each side. Units had to get into file to permit the passage of vehicles, and at every cross-road there were blocks caused by cross traffic. It was like trying to push the Lord Mayor's procession through the streets of London without clearing the route and holding up the traffic. There were also constant stoppages at the numerous level crossings, particularly at Place à Bruay, Marles les Mines and Chocques, to allow of the shunting and running of supply trains. At the first named place the 64th Brigade was held up for over an hour and a half by an accident to a train; at the second, part of the column west of the railway was delayed 45 minutes.² A ridiculous incident occurred on the outskirts of Béthune, where a military policeman stopped the 72nd Brigade because the brigade commander had no pass to enter the area. Cut into thus by cross traffic of all kinds, and not having a clear passage,

¹ See Chapter XVIII. The views of Field-Marshal Earl Haig have been mentioned in the Preface.

² The delays at the level crossing were not due to want of foresight on the part of the 21st and 24th Divisions, which had been informed by the XI. Corps that arrangements had been made and they need not anticipate stoppages. The French railway authorities, however, could not carry out the time-table agreed on.

the columns after a time naturally presented a very ragged appearance. At least two portions of the broken columns lost their way, took wrong turnings, and had to be brought back against the traffic, in order to rejoin. The lack of sufficient roads and the inherent difficulties of marching large bodies of men through an area behind a battle front congested with traffic, certainly contributed as much to the unnecessary fatigue of the 21st and 24th Divisions as did the inexperience of the troops and the transport drivers. 24/25
Sept.

The men were dead tired when, between 1 and 2 A.M. on the 25th, they began to arrive in their allotted areas, the last parties not getting in until after 6 A.M. ; and they lay down, where they halted, in close formation in the fields at the roadside. The divisions were disposed in depth, their leading brigades at Noeux les Mines and Beuvry, each about five miles from the British front trenches, and their rear brigades another three miles back at Haillicourt and Béthune, respectively. The rain, which had added to the discomfort of the march, was very slight after they halted, and ceased towards dawn ; but though they got rest they got little sleep, for at 4 A.M. the final bombardment of the German defences began, the most intense that had yet been heard on the Western front, and it continued through the early morning hours.

Sir John French, taking only his personal staff, had unexpectedly gone forward on the previous evening to the Chateau Philomel, some three miles south of Lillers, where only the normal French telephone system was available for communication with his headquarters staff nearly twenty miles away at St. Omer, and there was no communication by wire with his Armies. When, about 7 A.M., the reports of the advance of the I. and IV. Corps through the German first defence system began to arrive at Hinges, First Army headquarters, General Haig sent a staff officer by car to inform Sir John French of the success of the first assault, and to urge the necessity of the XI. Corps being ready to advance at once in support. At 8.45 A.M. he sent another message to the effect that the reserve brigades of the I. and IV. Corps had all either reached the German front trenches or were on the move there, and he requested that the XI. Corps might be placed at his disposal and pushed on at once.

From General Haig's point of view, the 21st and 24th Divisions should have moved forward at 6.30 A.M., simul-

25 Sept. taneously with the first assault, and two valuable hours had therefore already been lost. It was not until 9.30 A.M., however, in consequence of the reports of the continuous progress of the I. and IV. Corps, that Sir John French yielded to his urgent demands to move the divisions up, but did not at once place them under his orders. The following message was sent by G.H.Q. to the XI. Corps :—" 21st " and 24th Divisions will move forward to First Army " trenches as soon as situation requires and admits. On " arrival there they will come under orders of First Army. " Arrange move in communication with First Army accord- " ingly. Guards Division will move up to ground vacated " by 21st Division. XI. Corps, less 21st and 24th Divisions, " will remain in general reserve." General Haig was informed of this message at 9.50 A.M. (telegram received 10.2 A.M.) and " about 11.30 " Sir John French visited him and told him that he would arrange to put the XI. Corps (less the Guards Division) under his orders. The Commander-in-Chief then went on to see General Haking at Noeux les Mines, where he arrived about noon.¹ But it was not until 1.20 P.M. that the XI. Corps informed the G.O.C. First Army that the 21st and 24th Divisions were under him and marching to the areas ordered, but were delayed on the road.²

Sketch A. General Haking, who had established his headquarters at Noeux les Mines at 5.30 A.M., immediately on the receipt of the 9.30 A.M. message, despatched orders by messengers to his divisions, which reached them by 10.30 A.M. The 21st and 24th Divisions were to assemble as soon as possible on the line Mazingarbe (3,000 yards south-west of Vermelles)—Vermelles, on either side of the Béthune—Lens road, the 21st ready to support the IV. Corps and the 24th the I. Corps. The Guards Division was to move to the area Noeux les Mines—Labuissière (4 miles west of Noeux les Mines).

It was thus 11.15 A.M.—nearly five hours after the first assault of the I. and IV. Corps—before the leading brigades were moving away from their bivouacs and on the march. By corps order, as the cooks had delayed the advance

¹ The XI. Corps General Staff war diary states that the Commander-in-Chief gave his orders at 12.30 P.M.

² The statement in Sir John French's despatch of 15th October 1915, that the 21st and 24th Divisions were put at the disposal of the G.O.C. First Army at 9.30 A.M., " who at once ordered the General Officer Commanding XI. Corps to move them up in support of the attacking troops ", was the subject of a protest from General Haig to G.H.Q.

on the previous day, they were taken out of brigade and 25 Sept. unit control, and massed behind the divisions.¹

Shortly after the 21st Division began its march, it was halted by order to let an artillery ammunition column cross its route.

General Haig had originally intended to use the two divisions of the XI. Corps as a whole under General Haking ; but he was embarrassed by their not being handed over to him as early as he expected. Desiring to hasten the action of the reserve, at 11.25 A.M.—according to the records, but after Sir John French's visit "about 11.30 A.M."—in anticipation of the two divisions coming under him, he warned General Gough (I. Corps) that the leading brigade of the 24th Division (the 73rd) then about to reach Saily Labourse (3 miles W.N.W. of Vermelles), would come under his orders. The latter general proposed to employ the brigade to continue his offensive through and beyond Haisnes, and eventually ordered it to move through Vermelles to a position in rear of the 9th Division's original trenches, west of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

Later at 1.15 P.M. General Haig placed the 21st Division at the ultimate disposal of the IV. Corps. This instruction was cancelled at 2.35 P.M.,² but General Rawlinson ordered the leading brigade, the 62nd, to the support of the 15th Division, and soon after arriving at Mazingarbe it marched on towards Loos and Hill 70.

XI. CORPS : THE ORDERS FOR THE ADVANCE OF THE 21ST AND 24TH DIVISIONS

Owing to the bad light and a thin ground-mist, combined **Sketch** with the veil of smoke and gas that covered the battlefield, ^{28.} observation from aeroplanes had been impracticable during the morning, so that the situation, as it was understood at Hinges, was based entirely on the optimistic reports sent back during the morning by the fighting troops. These reports seem to have been justified at the time of their despatch. On many parts of the front, according to a number of regimental officers, the Germans were on the run ; it was only when they saw that the British paused after their first efforts and were not reinforced, that they

¹ This was done, according to the evidence, on the authority of an officer of the Quartermaster-General's branch of the XI. Corps Staff, without any written order.

² The 2.35 P.M. order of the First Army is dealt with below.

25 Sept. halted, came back and offered resistance. The 15th Division reported that it had taken Puits 14 bis and Hill 70, and that its reserve brigade was about to attack Cité St. Auguste. South of the Vermelles—Hulluch road, reports from the 1st Division stated—erroneously—that one of its brigades had captured Hulluch,¹ and that the Germans were retiring rapidly from the village, the British in pursuit. The 7th Division was said to be in Cité St. Elie. The 9th Division was believed to be pressing on to Haisnes with its centre and reserve brigades, whilst its right was also located in Cité St. Elie.

From these reports, General Haig inferred that the First Army was on the crest of the wave of victory; that it had broken through the German second and last line of defence in two central and vital places, Cité St. Elie and Hulluch; and that a break-through at Haisnes and Cité St. Auguste was imminent.

The reports, as we know, had overestimated the successes, and the great losses suffered were scarcely mentioned. Near Hill 70 the fortunes of the battle had reduced the two assaulting brigades of the 15th Division to the strength of a battalion, less than a thousand men; and the reserve brigade, far from attacking Cité St. Auguste, was fully occupied in assisting the remnants of the other two to maintain their position on the hill. Similarly at Hulluch, 1st Division patrols had seen the Germans retreating through the village, but the assaulting battalions, much weakened by casualties, had not crossed the Lens—La Bassée road in any strength. At Cité St. Elie the 7th Division was within a hundred yards of the second position, and nothing but a single trench and a line of wire separated its battalions from the village. But, although Germans could be seen moving both inside and outside the trench in the direction of Haisnes—probably to stem the advance of the 9th Division—both Cité Trench and the village itself were still held; and, since the two leading brigades had been reduced by losses to less than half their original strength, further attacks had been abandoned. The German second position had been entered by parties of the 9th Division opposite and south of Haisnes, but at no place had it been broken through.²

¹ See page 213.

² The commander of the French Tenth Army was equally misled by the first reports received; so much so that shortly after 1.10 P.M. he ordered General Curé (IX. Corps) to send forward his corps cavalry as quickly as possible to charge the enemy's guns (French Official Account,

The initial success against the German first line having ^{25 Sept.} been reported from so many quarters, General Haig took action on the information that he had received. At 10.30 A.M. he had ordered the 3rd Cavalry Division (Major-General C. J. Briggs),¹ the First Army reserve, to move to the Corons de Rutoire (south of Vermelles), in readiness to go forward through the assaulting infantry and capture the high ground between Harnes and Pont à Vendin (on the Haute Deule canal) as soon as Cité St. Auguste was taken. Major-General Briggs immediately galloped forward and visited the headquarters of the 1st, 7th and 15th Divisions. Finding the situation by no means as favourable as had been depicted, he organized officer patrols to remain in touch with the front lines of these divisions and report to him any opportunity for cavalry action. When therefore at 12.40 P.M. General Haig, believing that the attack on Cité St. Auguste was in progress, gave orders for the 3rd Cavalry Division to advance, Major-General Briggs was able to inform him that the situation did not admit of immediate compliance, but that he would move forward when opportunity offered. Having received no other report tending to discount the earlier ones, General Haig continued to believe that the situation was favourable and had no doubt that the 21st and 24th Divisions would still be able to carry forward the attack of the I. and IV. Corps, break down entirely the tottering German second line of defence and press on to objectives beyond it. At 2.35 P.M., believing that the cavalry had gone on, he ordered General Haking to "push forward at once between Hulluch and Cité St. Auguste" and occupy the high ground between Harnes and Pont "à Vendin, both inclusive, and secure the passages of the "Haute Deule canal at those places", thereby relieving the 3rd Cavalry Division, which would then advance on Carvin.

The reports that the I. Corps had entered Hulluch and that the IV. Corps had captured Hill 70 were passed on to the XI. Corps, and led General Haking to believe that the flanks of his advance would be secure. In accordance with the First Army orders, he directed the 21st and 24th Divisions (less the 62nd and 73rd Brigades, allotted to the Sketch 29.

Tome iii. p. 440). Soon afterwards French G.Q.G. telegraphed to G.H.Q. that a German divisional headquarters was packing up and moving to the rear. This telegram was repeated to the XI. Corps, and did a good deal to accentuate the prevailing misconception of the situation.

¹ It had already moved forward at 7.15 A.M. to Vaudricourt (5 miles west of Vermelles).

25 Sept. IV. and I. Corps),¹ to go forward across the open stretch of country between Loos village and the Vermelles—Hulluch road (both inclusive) “to secure the crossings over the “Haute Deule canal at Loison sous Lens, Harnes and “Pont à Vendin”, and he gave them as their first objective the high ground just short of the canal.

The 21st Division (Major-General G. T. Forestier-Walker) was to deploy on a frontage of a thousand yards between Fosse 7, on the Béthune—Lens road, and the Vermelles—Loos track, the 68rd Brigade leading and the 64th in support.

The 24th Division (Major-General Sir J. G. Ramsay) was to deploy on a similar frontage between the Vermelles—Loos track, and the Vermelles—Hulluch road, centre about Le Rutoire Farm, the 72nd Brigade leading, and the 71st Brigade in support.

The Guards Division was to remain in general reserve in the area Noeux les Mines—Labuissière.

The receipt of these orders impressed the 21st and 24th Divisions with the idea that the enemy had been heavily defeated and was everywhere retiring, and that no organized resistance need be expected. From the information and instructions given to Major-Generals Forestier-Walker and Ramsay, little more was required than a long march in pursuit of an already retiring and demoralized enemy. They seemed to confirm what the divisional commanders had been told a few days previously: first, by the Chief of the General Staff, that in no conceivable circumstances would the 21st and 24th Divisions be put in unless and until the Germans were absolutely smashed and retiring in disorder; and secondly, by the G.O.C. XI. Corps, when he ordered them to carry greatcoats and extra rations and be prepared for a long march.

The decision to throw in what remained of the 21st and 24th Divisions as a separate corps did not lead to the result expected. It would probably have served the cause better if the original purpose of handing over these untried troops to the two corps already on the ground been adhered to, and all had been used as reinforcements by brigades—as the 62nd and 73rd Brigades actually were—with proper artillery support. They were, however, sent in under a misapprehension. Without having been in action before or having seen a shot fired, these troops were actually confronted with a difficult situation on un-

¹ The artillery brigades of the 24th Division had been distributed between the I. and IV. Corps prior to the opening of the battle.

known ground, without guidance from the commanders and staffs who had been in the sector and had studied its features for months past. 25 Sept.

The advance of the two divisions, in accordance with the corps orders received at 10.30 A.M., to their assembly positions about Mazingarbe and Noyelles, behind Vermelles, did not begin until transport had come up, and practically all troops had a six hours' rest and a meal from their cookers. It was a march averaging only a distance of six miles from their bivouacs, but it took over three hours to accomplish; for the roads were crowded with vehicles going in both directions and with frequent parties of wounded coming from the front, whilst the 3rd Cavalry Division crossed the line of march. As on the previous days the progress of the marching columns was hindered and delayed, and long gaps were occasioned in formations and units. In the 21st Division, the head of the 63rd Brigade, which left its bivouacs at Houchin at 11.15 A.M., did not reach Mazingarbe (4 miles away) till 2.30 P.M., when it halted a little north of the village; whilst the 64th Brigade, which, owing to a delay in receiving the order, had not left Haillicourt till midday, did not arrive at Mazingarbe (7 miles away), until 4 P.M. So, too, in the 24th Division, the 72nd Brigade from Béthune did not arrive at the Bully stream, east of Noyelles (1 mile north of Mazingarbe) until a few minutes before 3 P.M. It was closely followed by the 71st Brigade, whose rearmost troops extended to Sailly Labourse, two miles back.

Although the orders for the further advance of the XI. Corps, issued by the First Army at 2.35 P.M., had been dictated to the divisional representatives at XI. Corps headquarters directly they were received, it was after 5 P.M. before they reached the four brigades and the engineer companies concerned. Meanwhile some of the first-line transport had again come up and a proportion of the troops received their midday meal from the cookers; but the 63rd Brigade and one battalion of the 64th had to move off without hot food, their vehicles having been delayed by the congestion of traffic. In one case the battalion commander, although his transport had arrived, refused to allow his men to feed.

At 6 P.M. all battalions had not yet reached their positions of deployment east of the Vermelles—Grenay road, and General Haking telephoned to First Army headquarters reporting the delay. Major-General R. H. K. Butler, the

25 Sept. Chief General Staff Officer of the First Army, informed him, in reply, that, in view of the lateness of the hour and the oncoming darkness, General Haig did not consider it advisable for the advance to go beyond the Lens—La Bassée road that night. Strong patrols, however, should be sent forward towards the line of the Haute Deule canal, preparatory to a further general advance on the following morning. Questioned as to the state of his brigades, General Haking, having consulted his divisional commanders, said that the men were tired, but ready to carry out the operation planned.¹

The XI. Corps thereupon at 6.10 P.M. issued fresh instructions:—"Leading brigades 21st and 24th Divisions will gain the Hulluch—Lens road as the first objective. Be prepared to continue advance if moon gives sufficient light. The right of the 72nd Brigade and left of 63rd Brigade will be directed on the Hulluch—Loos, Lens—La Bassée cross roads. G.O.C.'s 72nd and 63rd Brigades should consult at junction of Loos—Haisnes road and Lone Tree—Hulluch track (at 1 A.M.) regarding arrangements for further advance."

The written orders from the First Army confirming the telephone conversation between Generals Haking and Butler were not issued until 8.17 P.M.,² after the divisions

¹ The Assistant Provost Marshal, First Army, in his report on the march of these divisions on this day, stated:—"The men appeared to be very tired, and many complained that they were dead beat owing to the cessation of night marches from St. Omer." The diary of an engineer unit states:—"Marched out to attack [11.45 A.M.] still having had no food [since previous day], men dead tired with long night marching and continuous checks to columns on march."

It must, however, be pointed out that each of the first three night marches had been followed by at least fifteen hours' complete rest and full food in billets; and the final rest in Lillers lasted over forty hours. After the fatiguing march on the night of the 24th/25th there had been six to eight hours' rest and food. Many of the men, however, did not use the opportunity for daylight rest, and their officers were not sufficiently experienced to insist on it.

In view of the extra rations carried there was no reason for going foodless, even if the men could not be given a hot meal.

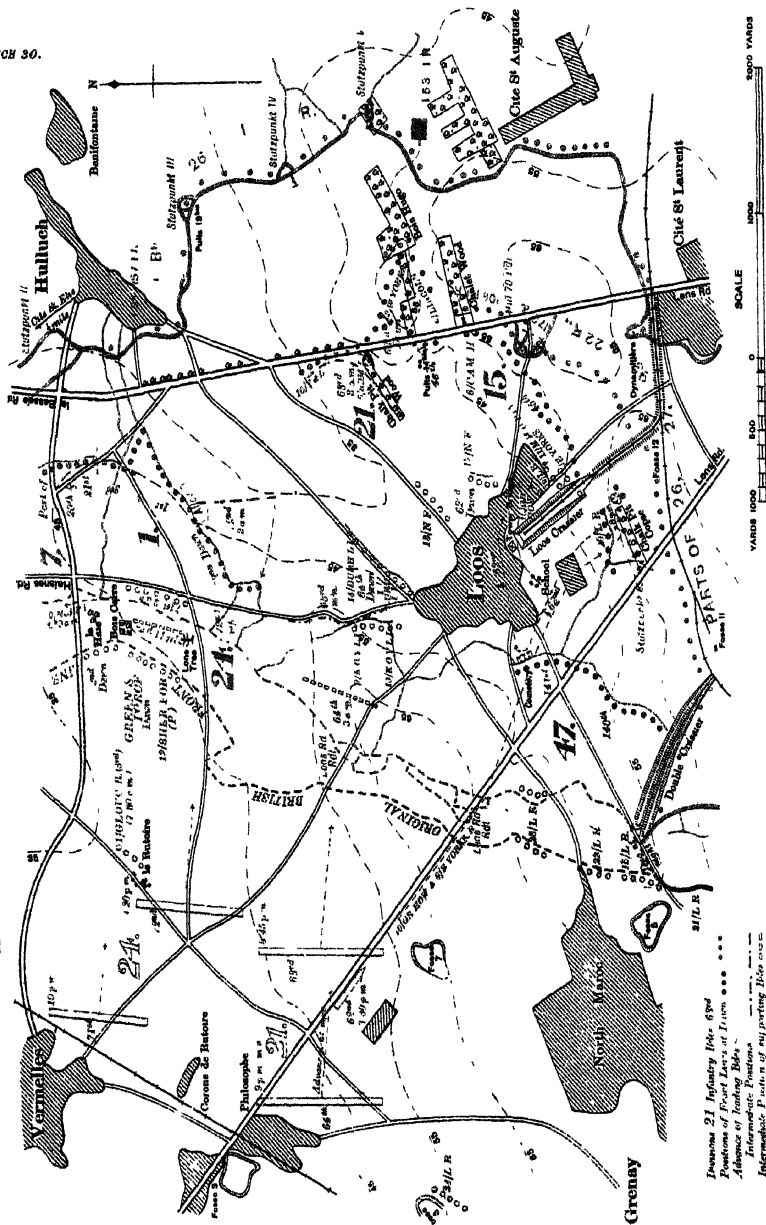
Brigadiers and battalion commanders of divisions other than the 21st and 24th who saw the battalions early on the 26th think that the men were tired, but, considering that they had marched in the dark across country, their sections of fours were quite creditable.

² "The 21st and 24th Divisions will secure and entrench the line from Hill 70 to west end of Hulluch, linking up with the troops of the IV. Corps on the right and the I. Corps on the left. This operation to be completed as soon as possible. Having gained this line, the 21st Division will send strong patrols to reconnoitre the canal bridges at Pont à Vendin. If these localities are found to be unoccupied, each division will send forward an advanced guard during the night to secure them. During

ВКЛЮЧ 30

*LOOS,
SITUATION SOUTH OF THE HULLUCH ROAD, DAWN, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 1915.*

SKETCH 30.



Positions 21 Infantry Bde: 69rd
 Positions of First Lcn: 2 at Linn.
 Advance of leading Bde:
 Intermediate Positions
 Intermediate Position of supporting Bde:
 Positions of Supply: 4 at Linn
 L. B. = London Regt

Heights in metres

Japanese Survey 1983

had gone forward. The XI. Corps communication service 25 Sept. having been hastily improvised, the amended orders did not reach the brigades of the 24th Division till 2 A.M., and those of the 21st Division until later still, when it was most difficult to get touch with other formations. They imposed a certain amount of caution, as they directed the XI. Corps to entrench between the IV. and I. Corps before proceeding further.

XI. CORPS: THE NIGHT MARCH OF THE MAIN BODIES OF THE 21ST AND 24TH DIVISIONS INTO THE LOOS VALLEY

The rain came down in torrents as in the failing light Sketch 30. the four brigades of the 21st and 24th Divisions began to form up. The orders issued for an advance in daylight were not modified in view of night conditions; for after experience of the congested state of the roads, it seemed best to go across country, sending only the transport along them.¹ The divisional staffs, too, had no knowledge of the ground, except such as could be gained by a study of the map and a reconnaissance from the air three days previously; and so little information as to the situation at the front was available, that a formation from which the force could rapidly deploy seemed essential.

The 21st Division, marching by the Béthune—Lens road, after passing Philosophe and reaching Fosse 7 about 8 P.M., moved out north of the road, and the 63rd Brigade (Br.-General N. T. Nickalls) at once formed up for moving on a compass bearing.² The 64th Brigade (Br.-General G. M. Gloster), delayed by traffic congestion at Mazin-garbe, deployed an hour later a thousand yards in rear on

“the night both divisions will bring up their artillery and be prepared to continue the attack at daylight to-morrow with their original objectives. The I. and IV. Corps on their flanks are making similar preparations for an attack at daylight along their respective fronts.”

¹ Two of the battalions of the 63rd Brigade, the 12/West Yorkshire and 10/York and Lancaster, under Lieut.-Colonel R. A. C. L. Leggett, of the former battalion, marched down the Lens road with the brigade transport as far as the original trench line, where they had to leave the transport. Turning to the left along the Grenay—Hulluch road and thence on to the Loos—Haisnes road, they halted north of Loos village and, without any march across country, successfully joined the remainder of the brigade, the 8/Somerset L.I. and 8/Lincolnshire, on the Loos—Haisnes road, east of the Loos Road Redoubt.

² The brigades were in mass—on a two battalion frontage—with companies in column of fours at ten paces interval, that is, each brigade occupied a frontage of about 120 paces. The leading battalions were covered by a line of scouts well in front, and a field company R.E. was in rear of each brigade.

25 Sept. the south side of the road. The 24th Division, crossing the railway near Vermelles, began to form up about half an hour after the 21st, the 72nd Brigade (Br.-General B. R. Mitford) about Le Rutoire Farm, and the 71st Brigade (Br.-General M. T. Shewen) to its left rear.

The artillery of the 21st Division remained near Philo-sophe. That of the 24th, the bulk of which had been attached to the I. and IV. Corps, was ordered to return and be in action east of Le Rutoire by daylight on the 26th; but it was long after this time before fighting communication with it could be re-established.

Night had darkened, when the leading brigades, the 63rd and 72nd, moved off independently on a compass bearing of 112° and began to cross the great open space of rank grassland that lay between them and the Lens—La Bassée road, three miles distant. At times there was fair visibility, for the enemy bombardment of Loos had turned the village into a furnace of flame, with "Tower Bridge" silhouetted in black outline against the ruddy glow, and the sky was lightened by other burning villages, shell fire and Very lights. From time to time would come a wave of mist, when all was hidden. Progress was exceedingly wearisome and slow owing to the state of the ground and the obstacles encountered. This was especially the case where the divisions crossed the British and German trenches, the 21st Division about the Loos Road Redoubt, and the 24th about Lone Tree. There were few bridges available over the British trenches, only narrow gaps in the German wire, and a few single planks over the trenches beyond; it therefore took over an hour for the two leading brigades to pass the series of obstacles and close up again on the far side, where packs were left. The line of the Loos—Haisnes road, immediately east of the trenches, was not reached till after midnight. The efforts to get the first-line transport¹ forward with the brigades failed. That of the 63rd and 64th Brigades struggled through the mud and shell holes of the Lens road on its way to Loos, but was held up near the original front trenches, the road here being blocked by derelict wagons—mainly those of the 62nd Brigade²—broken up by the German artillery that

¹ The first-line transport on the establishment of each battalion consisted of one water cart, five small-arm ammunition carts, two Lewis-gun carts, two tool carts, one bomb wagon, one Maltese (medical) cart, one officers' mess cart, four travelling kitchens (cookers) and eight pack mules, but the cooks had been left behind.

² See Chap. XVI.

had been shelling the road throughout the evening. In the 26 Sept. same way the transport of the 71st and 72nd Brigades was held up at the Corons de Rutoire. Here, no authority having arranged for the co-ordination of the movements of the I. and XI. Corps troops in the same area, the bridges across a back line of British trenches were blocked for some hours by ammunition wagons of the 1st Division returning to be filled, and by a stream of ambulances from Le Rutoire Farm. The confusion in the darkness was considerable, and the transport was therefore parked off the road near the Corons.

At 1.10 A.M. the commanders of the two leading brigades, Br.-Generals Nickalls and Mitford, met at their appointed rendezvous. The latter had shortly before received (12.25 A.M.) a report from the scouts of the Royal West Kent, whom he had sent forward, that Hulluch was held by the enemy, who had opened fire on them with machine guns and rifles. He thereupon sent a staff officer—Major Sir W. A. I. Kay,¹ who had been lent to him from the divisional staff for the advance—to get information from the 3rd Brigade on the left. At 1.20 A.M. this officer returned to the rendezvous. He had met Br.-General Davies, commanding the 3rd Brigade, who confirmed the fact that Hulluch was in German occupation, and said that the situation was understood by his divisional and corps staffs; and that his brigade had received orders to halt in its present position, that is, in the German communication and cover trenches immediately west of the Lens—La Bassée road, until daylight, when further orders were expected.

With a change of the wind to eastward, the rain had now ceased and the light of a full moon broke through the clearing clouds. In the circumstances, Br.-Generals Nickalls and Mitford decided to continue the general advance by moonlight across the Lens—La Bassée road and through the German second position. To cover this movement, having no knowledge of the strength and unbroken character of the defences, General Mitford agreed to detail one battalion to capture Hulluch village or at least to hold its southern edge.

¹ Killed 4th October 1918 in command of the 3rd Brigade.

THE SITUATION OF THE 63RD, 64TH, 71ST AND 72ND
BRIGADES OF THE XI. CORPS AT DAWN ON THE 26TH
SEPTEMBER

26 Sept. Returning to his brigade, Br.-General Mitford sent
Sketch Major Kay back to divisional headquarters to report and
30. instructed Colonel E. Vansittart, commanding the 8/Royal West Kent, to attack Hulluch with his battalion, so as to cover the further advance of the 21st and 24th Divisions between Hulluch and Cité St. Auguste. Soon after 2 A.M., when the West Kents had moved off and had drawn fire, and the advance of the rest of the brigade was about to be resumed, a message arrived from 24th Division directing Br.-General Mitford, in consequence of General Haig's 8.17 P.M. order, to halt west of the Lens—La Bassée road, keeping touch with the 3rd Brigade on his left and the 63rd Brigade on his right. On this, Br.-General Mitford decided to halt his brigade where it was, and sent word to Br.-General Nickalls accordingly. The attack on Hulluch was cancelled, and the 8/Royal West Kent was directed to occupy some empty trenches near the Lens road. After the other battalions had come up, the brigade was formed up on a front of nine hundred yards to the west of the Lens—La Bassée road, and began to entrench, the 9/East Surrey (Lieut.-Colonel F. L. Sanders) and 8/Royal West Kent (Colonel E. Vansittart) in front, and the 8/Buffs (Colonel F. C. Romer) and 8/Queen's (Lieut.-Colonel F. H. Fairtlough) in support. The tool carts having been left behind, the entrenching implement carried by each man was all that was available for the purpose, and proved of little use in the hard chalky soil. At 3.45 A.M., shortly before dawn, it was seen that sufficient shelter for protection in daylight had not been excavated. The battalions, covered by the Royal West Kent, were therefore withdrawn to the support trenches of the German original front defence system, and to the communication trench (Alley 4) leading towards Hulluch, joining up with the 3rd Brigade on their immediate left.

The 71st Brigade, in rear of the 72nd, moved forward to the British original trenches, centre opposite Lone Tree, where it halted for the night. During the early hours of the 26th Br.-General Shewen was ordered by the 7th Division, who furnished an officer as a guide, to detach one of his battalions "to retake the Quarries". The 9/Norfolk (Lieut.-Colonel E. H. D. Stracey) was sent at 1 A.M., and

two hours later, on further instructions from the 9th 26 Sept. Division, the 8/Bedfordshire (Colonel E. S. C. Kennedy)¹ followed for the same purpose. Only the 9/Suffolk (Major R. V. G. Brettell) and the 11/Essex (Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Radclyffe), together with the 104th Field Company R.E. and the divisional Pioneer battalion—12/Sherwood Foresters—were therefore left under the 71st Brigade.

In the 63rd Brigade, Br.-General Nickalls, after his interview with Br.-General Mitford, returned to his headquarters, and ordered the advance to be continued. The 8/Lincolnshire (Lieut.-Colonel H. E. Walter) and the 12/West Yorkshire (Lieut.-Colonel R. A. C. L. Leggett) led the way, followed by the 8/Somerset L.I. (Colonel H. C. Denny) and the 10/York and Lancaster (Colonel A. L. Lindesay) in support.

Shortly afterwards Br.-General Mitford's message was received to the effect that the 72nd Brigade had been ordered by 24th Division to halt and wait till daylight. The fresh instructions from the 21st Division, based on First Army orders of 8.17 P.M., had not yet reached Br.-General Nickalls, so he decided to continue the advance alone. On reaching the Loos—Hulluch road the brigade came into a zone of rifle and machine-gun fire thought to be from the direction of Chalk Pit Wood, fire which had been going on most of the night; but the two leading battalions, the 12/West Yorkshire and 8/Lincolnshire, only fixed bayonets and did not reply,² as it had been ascertained by the West Yorkshire scouts that the pit was in British hands. The fire actually came from Hill 70 and even from beyond it. Shortly before 3 A.M. the Lens—La Bassée road was reached at and north of the Chalk Pit, where the remnants of the 2nd Brigade were found entrenching on the front east of the road, from Bois Hugo to north of the Chalk Pit, occupied the previous evening. Although the night had been clear, the unexpected arrival of the 63rd Brigade *en masse* had very nearly led to its being fired on.

¹ The 8/Bedfordshire, unable to get in touch with the 9/Norfolk, which by this time was in action against the Quarries, returned to the brigade during the morning of the 26th.

² Extract from the war diary of the 63rd Brigade:—"No information had been received that the position of the Chalk Pit was in occupation of our own troops. Luckily, no unfortunate results took place, which might very easily have occurred with new troops advancing to a position at night which was not known to be in our possession. It reflects great credit on the officers concerned, who kept their men so well in hand. . . . The absence of information of what was happening elsewhere was nothing short of disastrous, as no one knew what anyone else was doing."

26 Sept. Br.-Generals Pollard (2nd Brigade) and Nickalls now met in the Chalk Pit and discussed the question of relief. That the 2nd Brigade and Green's Force should be relieved during the night by the 21st Division was in accordance with instructions issued by the IV. Corps ; but Br.-General Nickalls being under the XI. Corps had not yet received any order or notification on the subject. Nevertheless, he accepted the situation, and took over the position as he found it. On relief the various units of the 2nd Brigade and of Green's Force left in turn and moved back to the British original front line, losing 4 officers and 60 other ranks from shell fire during their journey. The line of rifle pits and the rough shelters that had been dug during the night were at once occupied by the 63rd Brigade, and the men, with the aid of their portable entrenching implements began to make them into more or less connected trenches. Br.-General Nickalls, however, gave his battalions to understand that the position they had taken over was only a temporary one, in anticipation of a further advance. No wire being available, it was not possible, even if so desired, to establish a definite line of defence.

It was now nearly 7 A.M. Though the sky after midnight had been clear, at the first signs of dawn a slight mist began to form above the sodden ground, and soon enveloped all but the higher portions of the battlefield.¹ Br.-General Nickalls came to the conclusion that it would be best to push on at once under cover of the mist through the German second position. He was in the act of issuing orders for an advance at 8 A.M. when a general staff officer of the 21st Division arrived and told him that a general attack had been ordered for 11 A.M. Br.-General Nickalls thereupon decided to wait.

**Sketch
30.**

The position now occupied by the 63rd Brigade after its difficult night march was as follows :—The 12/West Yorkshire was in position in the double line of shelter-pits immediately north of Bois Hugo, and two to three hundred yards east of the Lens road. On its left the 10/York and Lancaster held a double line along the Lens road, north of the Chalk Pit, on a frontage of 400 yards. Three companies of the 8/Lincolnshire were in a position along the southern edge of Bois Hugo, the fourth occupying some rifle pits on the northern side of the wood alongside a company of the 12/West Yorkshire in rear of the remainder of that battalion which faced east. Two companies of the

¹ For instance, the top of Hill 70 was clear.

8/Somerset L.I. were halted in Chalk Pit Wood as brigade reserve. The other two, with Colonel H. C. Denny, having moved too much to the right, at daybreak found themselves mixed with the 46th Brigade on Hill 70, between Chalet Wood and Hill 70 Redoubt: being unable to rejoin the brigade during daylight, they eventually took part in the action on the hill. Bois Hugo itself and Chalet Wood were not occupied although they were patrolled, and communication was established between the troops on either side of the former.

The 64th Brigade was assembled in rear of the 63rd, with the 15/ and 14/Durham Light Infantry (Lieut.-Colonels E. T. Logan and A. S. Hamilton) in the German communication trench along the Grenay—Hulluch road, and 10/ and 9/K.O.Y.L.I. (Lieut.-Colonels A. W. A. Pollock and C. W. D. Lynch) in support, five hundred yards behind, in a similar trench along the Loos—Haisnes road. This position they had reached about 3 A.M.

The four brigades of the 21st and 24th Divisions and the field companies R.E. with them had thus spent the night in an exhausting march across country, whereas the G.O.C. First Army believed that the bulk of both of them, having only two miles to advance, were getting a fair night's rest on the Lens—La Basseé road prior to continuing the offensive in the morning.

NOTE I

THE COMPOSITION AND TRAINING OF THE 21ST AND 24TH DIVISIONS

The 21st Division originally commanded by Lieut.-General Sir E. T. H. Hutton, but from the 1st April 1915 by Major-General G. T. Forestier-Walker (who had been with the B.E.F. from August 1914 until that date as B.G.G.S. of the II. Corps and Second Army) was raised from the "third hundred thousand" (K.3) during the early part of September 1914. Its infantry consisted, except 2 battalions, of Northerners from Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire. Of its General Staff officers when it went out to France all three were *p.s.c.*; two had previous staff experience in France and one had not. Of the A & Q staff, one had some previous staff experience in England; none of the three were *p.s.c.* Of the four brigadiers, two were Regular officers, and two retired Regulars. All the battalion commanders were ex-Regular officers, mostly retired officers of the Indian Army; besides these there were only 14 Regular and ex-Regular officers in the 13 battalions. Other officers of the infantry were newly commissioned, mostly without special training. In the ranks were a few old soldiers, and some ex-N.C.O.'s

were attached as instructors, but of these the earlier divisions had got the pick.

The division was billeted about Aylesbury and Tring and was not concentrated in hutments about Halton until the middle of May 1915, moving to the Aldershot Command into huts in the Godalming—Frensham area at the end of July, when transport was issued to it. Owing to the shortage of arms, clothing and equipment, and to the officers requiring instruction before they could instruct, the training of the division did not progress well, and by April 1915 was little advanced. Until the middle of June nothing could be attempted in the way of divisional or brigade training except a weekly route march combined with a tactical scheme. After that date, a fair amount of brigade training and a few divisional exercises were carried out. But the training could not be continuous owing to the claims of musketry, the courses of which were not completed until after the division reached Aldershot, and the absence of the divisional artillery at practice on Salisbury Plain. From May onwards the officers were given much instruction by means of tactical exercises on the ground.

The 24th Division was a "K.3" division like the 21st, and consisted of battalions drawn from 18 different regiments of the Home, Eastern, and Midland counties. It was commanded by Major-General Sir J. G. Ramsay, a retired Indian officer. Its General Staff consisted of *p.s.c.* officers who had served previously in France, but not on the Staff, and two had been severely wounded. One of the A & Q staff was *p.s.c.* but was an Indian officer without staff experience. No battalion had more than one Regular or ex-Regular officer besides the C.O., who was in all cases except one a retired officer either Regular or Militia. All the brigadiers were retired officers, two of them from the Indian Army.

The division was concentrated on the South Downs near East Shoreham and Patcham towards the end of May, and moved to Aldershot at the end of July. Its difficulties and training were in general similar to those of the 21st Division; but it received its guns and rifles later, the latter not arriving until May and the former not until the division was at Aldershot; and more digging and less marching was done. There was very little combined training, and that mostly in trench warfare. The time at Aldershot was taken up mainly with unit training, musketry and, for the artillery, practice on Salisbury Plain.

In general the two divisions were thought to be better trained than they really were, and were sent into action after being three weeks in France in back areas, without any period of initiation.

NOTE II

ROAD CONTROL BEHIND THE LOOS BATTLE AREA

The road control in the First Army area behind the battle front was under the general superintendence of the Assistant Provost Marshal of the First Army, but the routes had been worked out by the "Q" Branch,¹ solely, as the maps show, for the purpose of distribution

¹ The senior officers of the Q.M.G. staffs of the First Army and the XI. Corps were not Staff College trained officers.

of supplies and ammunition from railheads, and the circulation of ambulance vehicles. The routes, which were allotted to "motor" and "horse" traffic separately, radiated from centres like Béthune, Labuissière, Noeux les Mines, etc., without any arrangement for the through passage of large reinforcements to the front, except by the two "Up" motor routes Marles les Mines—Labuissière—Noeux les Mines—Mazingarbe, and Béthune—Beuvry, and thence by either the Lens or La Bassée road.

There were no through routes for horse traffic; the routes for this traffic were short, though often circuitous and zigzag, and came to an end on motor routes or at stations and hospitals. The two "Up" through motor routes were entered or crossed at many places by the radiating routes. Thus to get to Marles les Mines from its billets south of Lillers the 21st Division would be on roads with the traffic against it or uncontrolled. Onwards on the motor road to Mazingarbe, seven cross and entering streams of traffic, besides five level crossings, had to be traversed. Similarly as far as Chocques the 24th Division would find the traffic against it, then it would arrive on an "Up" motor route to Béthune. To get through Béthune to Vermelles nine cross and entering streams, besides three level crossings had to be passed. This mattered little with short quickly moving motor convoys, but meant dislocation with divisions, each occupying fifteen miles of road when closed up.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH/26TH SEPTEMBER 1915 (*concluded*)

IV. AND I. CORPS : THE GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK AND THE LOSS OF THE QUARRIES

(Sketches 29, 30)

IV. CORPS : THE SITUATION ON HILL 70 AND THE CORPS FRONT DURING THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH/26TH SEP- TEMBER

Sketch 29. WE must now return to the operations of the 62nd Brigade (Br.-General E. B. Wilkinson) of the 21st Division, which had been placed under the orders of the IV. Corps and put at the disposal of the 15th Division, in order to support and, if necessary, relieve the troops on Hill 70. After having had dinners about midday near Mazingarbe the brigade was at once moved forward. The situation on the hill was not clear to the IV. Corps, and Br.-General Wilkinson was told that, if on reaching Loos he found that Hill 70 had been abandoned, he was to retake it and thence press forward to Cité St. Auguste. Thus, having no information and no knowledge of the ground, he could do no more than point out the position of Hill 70 on the map to his battalion commanders, and tell them "we do not know what has happened on Hill 70. You must go and find out: if the Germans hold it, attack them; if our people are there, support them; if no one is there, dig in." He decided in the first instance to send only two battalions forward, and accordingly at 3 P.M. the 8/East Yorkshire (Lieut.-Colonel B. I. Way) and 10/Green Howards (Colonel A. de S. Hadow) marched by Philosophe

and Fosse 7 towards Loos. The advance of the two units ^{25 Sept.} was delayed by the action of a military policeman at the level crossing of Noeux les Mines, who informed the officers that from this point, according to the routine of trench warfare, the battalions must open out with intervals between sections; and, from lack of experience, they partially obeyed instead of disregarding his instructions. The other two battalions of the brigade—the 12/ and 13/Northumberland Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonels H. B. Warwick and Lord Crofton)—followed an hour later.

By 4.30 P.M. the two Yorkshire battalions still with ^{Sketch} their packs on, marching down the Lens road in fours with ^{30.} a hundred yards interval between platoons, and their first-line transport following, reached the crest of the slope leading down into the Loos valley. After crossing the bridges over the original front line trenches, they left the road and headed for the Loos Pylons, but shortly afterward came into full view of some German guns in Cité St. Pierre, across the valley. These opened on the column with shrapnel before the battalions had time to extend, and on their transport on the road, which was practically destroyed, the remains of the vehicles and animals completely blocking traffic. In the stir of the moment, however, neither brigade staff nor battalions having anything but the 1/100,000 map, and no guides having been provided, the direction of advance was mistaken. Instead of moving towards Loos village, where they hoped to find out which rise of ground was called Hill 70, and gather information, the 8/East Yorkshire, followed by the 10/Green Howards, continued straight on towards Lens along the western side of the village and Loos Crassier. In this manner they quickly came upon the 1/20th London (47th Division), which had been holding the German communication trench two hundred yards north of Chalk Pit Copse and part of the copse since the morning. Lieut.-Colonel Hubback, commanding the 1/20th London, tried to stop their further advance, but the extended lines of Yorkshiremen moved straight on across the trench towards the copse.¹ A few minutes later intense machine-gun fire was opened on them

¹ Br.-General Thwaites, commanding the 141st Brigade, on his way to visit his battalions at this moment, met Br.-General Wilkinson and his staff at the estaminet at the junction of the North Maroc—Loos and Béthune—Lens roads, and pointed out the situation as far as he knew it:—that is to say that the 141st Brigade had occupied and was holding from Chalk Pit Copse to the south-east end of Loos Crassier, and that Hill 70 was to the north-east of the Crassier.

25 Sept. by the Germans still holding the southern end of the copse, and both the 8/East Yorkshire and the leading companies of the 10/Green Howards sustained very heavy casualties. The situation now became clear, and efforts were made to get the battalions into the line. Some parties occupied the gap near the Crassier; some went into the 1/20th London's trench, where they remained till dark. Others, however, retraced their steps parallel to the Lens road, and, on approaching Grenay—Loos cross roads behind the front of the 141st Brigade, were mistaken in the dusk for an advancing enemy, and were fired upon by the rear company of the 10/Green Howards, which had halted there. Some confusion ensued, and it was 7.30 P.M. before Colonels Way and Hadow were able to restore order. By degrees the 10/Green Howards was re-assembled about and east of the cemetery; the 8/East Yorkshire, together with the remnants of the 1/19th London—collected earlier by the staff of the 141st Brigade—dug in, continuing the line of the 20/London over and beyond the Loos Crassier. There being more men than were required in the front line, two companies were employed in making communication trenches, and clearing German stragglers out of the houses on the outskirts of Loos.

By this time the other two battalions of the 62nd Brigade, with Br.-General Wilkinson, had arrived without incident in Loos. The general reported to the 45th Brigade in the village, and was asked by Br.-General Wallerston to relieve those battalions of the 44th and 46th Brigades on Hill 70 which had not already been replaced by the 45th Brigade. As his two leading battalions had gone astray, Br.-General Wilkinson had only the two Northumberland battalions at his disposal, and he acted with caution. The 12/Northumberland Fusiliers was halted in lines of companies at fifty paces interval immediately east of Loos village; and first only two platoons and then two more were sent to Hill 70. The arrival of the Northumberlands was taken by the 9/Black Watch and the 10/Gordon Highlanders, the last remaining battalions of the 44th Brigade on the hill, for the full relief of which they had had warning, and about 11 P.M. they withdrew. On the company commander of the Northumberland Fusiliers reporting this, he was instructed to remain where he was. The last of Br.-General Wilkinson's battalions, the 13/Northumberland Fusiliers was sent from Loos at 11.30 P.M. to report to the 46th Brigade, said to be a

thousand yards north-east of Loos on the Loos—Haisnes ^{25/26} road. It was eventually met by Lieut.-Colonel Purvis, ^{Sept.} commanding the 12/Highland L.I. (46th Brigade), who, knowing Br.-General Matheson's wishes, led the battalion into position, placing three companies in general support on the Loos—Hulluch road. He sent the remaining company forward to support a platoon of his battalion on the extreme left front of the 15th Division near the Lens road, south of Chalet Wood, so as to form a defensive flank. Here also the arrival of a single company of a fresh brigade was mistaken for a general relief, and a number of the 46th Brigade still remaining began to withdraw across the Lens—Hulluch road and past the north of Loos village. Some went back to the British original trenches, but others were stopped by Br.-General Matheson, and about 7.30 A.M. he led them back again to a position on the Loos—Hulluch road, near the 13/Northumberland Fusiliers, in order to have something on which the front line could fall back in case of emergency.

As a result of the night's operation, the 62nd Brigade had become split up, and of its four battalions, only the two Northumberland Fusiliers, each less a company in the front line, remained under the hand of Br.-General Wilkinson, and their two detached companies formed the principal garrison of the line between Hill 70 and Chalet Wood.

During the night of the 25th/26th, the Germans launched a counter-attack against the 7/Royal Scots Fusiliers, the right of the 45th Brigade, below the summit of Hill 70 on the eastern side of Loos Crassier. It completely failed. A second and heavier one, at 5.30 A.M., made from Cité St. Laurent, was repulsed by the same battalion, greatly assisted by the good work of the 11th Motor Machine-Gun Battery, under Major C. B. Hall,¹ which had been brought up the previous evening.

At daybreak on the 26th, therefore, the situation on Hill 70 and about Loos had not appreciably altered. The 47th Division still maintained the positions it had won the previous morning, forming a defensive flank between the Double Crassier and the Loos Crassier facing the north-eastern suburbs of Lens. The 45th Brigade (15th Division), with two battalions of the 62nd (21st Division) in support,

¹ There were by this time 18 (2 Canadian) motor machine-gun batteries with the B.E.F.; of these, 5, attached to the I. and IV. Corps and 9th, 12th and 15th Divisions, were engaged at Loos. These units had been sanctioned in February 1915.

26 Sept. held the front line on the western slope of Hill 70. On its left the line, very roughly entrenched, was continued by parties of the 46th and 62nd Brigades and the 6/Cameron Highlanders as far as the western end of Bois Hugo. Here, the 63rd Brigade (21st Division) had replaced units of the 1st Division at and north of the Chalk Pit and Bois Hugo during the night.¹ In support of this brigade were the greater part of the two Northumberland battalions of the 62nd Brigade at the eastern exits of Loos and the whole of the 64th Brigade just north of Loos.

Beyond the gap in the IV. Corps front between Chalk Pit Wood and Hulluch, the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division had remained in Alley 4 to which it had swung back. A sharp attack was made about midnight against the 1/South Wales Borderers, on the left of the 1st Division front in Gun Trench, its own left near the Vermelles—Hulluch road. Behind its position were three abandoned German field guns, which it had not yet been possible to remove on account of the shelling of the roads. Anticipating that the enemy would make an attempt to recover them, Lieut.-Colonel R. S. Gwynn had his battalion fully prepared and his machine guns laid. His expectation proved correct, and a party of Germans, estimated at three hundred, consisting of bombers and bayonet men, advanced, some of them calling "Don't shoot, we are the Welch". The Borderers waited until they were close to the parapet, and then swept them down by fire with a loss to themselves of a dozen wounded. Next morning practically every one of the two hundred and fifty South Wales Borderers in the front line was in possession of a German helmet.

I. CORPS : THE SITUATION ON THE CORPS FRONT ON THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH/26TH SEPTEMBER. THE LOSS OF AN ADVANCED TRENCH AND THE QUARRIES, AND THE HOLDING OF FOSSE 8.

Sketch Enemy fire on the I. Corps front had continued
29. throughout the evening of the 25th, particularly directed on the Quarries and Fosse 8, and at 1 A.M. on the 26th a definite infantry attack was made against the 7th and 9th

¹ The southernmost post of the 2nd Brigade near Bois Hugo had by some mischance been overlooked and left behind ; thus no change in their neighbours was apparent and the arrival of the battalions of the 21st Division was not noticed by the troops of the 15th Division near Chalet Wood.

Division fronts from the Vermelles—Hulluch road up to and including Fosse 8.¹ This counter-attack was carried out with great skill, so well screened and with so little noise, that the enemy arrived in most cases within bombing distance without being discovered. The left of it came against the advanced position of the 20th Brigade, the new trench near the crossing of the Lens—La Bassée and Vermelles—Hulluch roads, west of Hulluch, where the work of digging and wiring was still in progress.² The Germans (*15th Reserve Regiment*) were among the covering party and engineers at work, before any alarm had been given, and after a short fight the defenders of the trench—mostly 2/ and 6/Gordon Highlanders and 8/Devonshire—were outflanked, even attacked in rear by a small party, and fell back. By order of Br.-General Watts, who was visiting his battalions at the time, they were rallied in Gun Trench. The parados of this trench had been selected as the main line of defence in case of mishap, or of counter-attack before the advanced position was finished. A number of Germans following close behind, when the 20th Brigade retired, escaped being fired on and managed to enter Gun Trench; but they were driven out, with heavy loss, after hand to hand fighting in which the 2/Bedfordshire, 2/Border and the two support companies of the 6/Gordons took prominent parts. A cloud formed by a smoke candle, lighted by someone on the British side, in mistake for a signal flare, now drifted towards Cité St. Elie, and is said to have caused a gas alarm among the enemy, and prevented reinforcements from coming up. In any case, the surviving Germans disappeared and made no further move. The advanced post at the cross roads was, however, lost, and Gun Trench now became the front line.

A more important German success was gained in the centre at the Quarries. Here a trench about a couple of hundred yards beyond the excavation was held at night-fall by the 2/Green Howards (which had relieved the 4/Cameron's), 1/South Staffordshire and the 2/Queen's of the 21st and 22nd Brigades (7th Division), with their supports in the Quarries. Unfortunately, no definite contact had been established with the 27th Brigade (9th Division) on the

¹ According to German accounts, from the line Cité St Elie—Haisnes in a south-westerly direction by the *117th Division*, reinforced by the *26th Reserve Brigade*. See Note at end of Chapter.

² See pages 238-40 and 249.

25/26 Sept. left, which, it will be remembered, had been rallied after nightfall in Fosse Alley, its right south of the Loos—Haines track, five hundred yards north of the Quarries. During the night the Quarries position received a good many enemy gas shell, and was further rendered uncomfortable by artillery fire, which the troops believed to be British. Towards 1 A.M. orders arrived for the 21st Brigade to be withdrawn and re-formed in rear with the view to an advance at dawn. This operation was in progress, the 1/S. Staffordshire having been assembled to relieve the Green Howards, when the Germans closed round. Although they were checked by fire at the southern edge, they found no one to oppose them in the gap near the 27th Brigade, to the north of the excavation. From this side they entered the Quarries and they also came in from the rear. Their arrival was so unexpected that Br.-General Bruce (27th Brigade), who had come to the Quarries to use the telephone, was captured in the signal dug-out. Lieut.-Colonels Ovens and Young of the South Staffordshire and Green Howards, who, hearing of his presence, re-entered the Quarries to speak to him, found a German sentry over the dug-out. They, with some of their remaining men managed to escape in the darkness and confusion; but though the 2/Queen's made desperate efforts to recapture the Quarries, in the course of which Lieut.-Colonel M. G. Heath was killed, by 1.30 A.M. the enemy had entire possession, and was lining the western edge. His attempts to advance further were stopped by the 2/Green Howards and 1/South Staffordshire, which covered the withdrawal of the other battalions of the 21st and 22nd Brigades to the next line of trenches, the original German front line six hundred yards west of the Quarries. Lieut.-Colonel Loch, commanding the 12/Royal Scots, right battalion of the 27th Brigade—the troops of which had been subjected to much shelling and sniping—had heard heavy bombing in progress to his right rear. Now, finding the Germans in possession of the Quarries, he decided—as senior officer in the absence of Br.-General Bruce, and after a consultation with the other battalion commanders in Fosse Alley—to withdraw the remains of the brigade to the original British trenches, regain touch there with the 7th Division, and reorganize. This retirement was carried out in good order, some units halting in the part of the German old front line called Quarry Trench, and gaining touch there with the 21st and 22nd Brigades. South of

the Quarries, the Wiltshire and part of the Bedfordshire held the line along Stone Alley to Breslau Avenue. Here the Green Howards had rallied, thus linking up with the units in Quarry Trench. A counter-attack was delivered on the Quarries from the old German front trenches at 6.45 A.M. on the 26th, by a battalion (9/Norfolk of the 71st Brigade)¹ of the 24th Division, lent to the 7th Division by the XI. Corps for the purpose. Dead tired by its night march its attack was immediately stopped by heavy fire and had to be abandoned after 13 officers and 409 other ranks had become casualties. 25/26
Sept.

The right of the German attack—on Fosse 8—was entirely unsuccessful, although it was made just as the 26th Brigade, reduced to under a thousand men, was being relieved by the 73rd Brigade (Br.-General W. A. Oswald) of the 24th Division. This brigade had been handed over to the I. Corps by General Haig's instructions at 11.25 A.M. on its march up to Sailly Labourse,² and General Gough had placed it under the 9th Division, which ordered it to assemble in the old British trenches west of the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Although guides were provided, the congestion of traffic and the difficulties of crossing the battlefield were so great that the leading units did not reach the rendezvous, only four miles away, until after 4 P.M., and the tail of the column did not arrive until nearly 7 P.M. Whilst the brigade was assembling, the 26th Brigade reported that strong reinforcements were required in order to ensure Fosse 8 being held. General Gough decided to employ the whole of the 73rd Brigade there, and informed Major-General Thesiger that it might be used to relieve the 26th. A general staff officer of the 9th Division and officers of the 26th Brigade were sent to guide it, and the battalions were sent forward, first one, then two, and then the fourth. Having to cross five lines of German trenches and other obstacles in failing light and darkness, it was not until nearly 10 P.M. that the leading men, dog-tired with their march across country, began to file into Corons Alley Trench north-west of the Dump at Fosse 8, the left of the 26th Brigade position. In the darkness and rain, the relief was a lengthy proceeding, and about 1 A.M., whilst it was still in progress, the German attackers were

¹ See page 290. The 9/Norfolk remained in the trenches south-west of the Quarries until the early hours of the 27th, when it rejoined its division at Sailly Labourse.

² See page 247.

25/26 Sept. discovered only a hundred yards away.¹ Fire was at once opened by the men of the 26th and 73rd Brigades who were in the trenches, the machine guns of the latter brigade were hurriedly got into position, and the attack was repulsed, only a few Germans of the *91st Reserve Regiment* actually gaining a footing at the north-eastern corner of the position, where they were dealt with by the bayonet. The 26th Brigade then went back, and after getting a meal re-occupied the old front line.

The 73rd Brigade took over the whole of the front of the Fosse 8 position down to Fosse Alley with the 9/Royal Sussex (Lieut.-Colonel J. A. G. Rainsford), 12/Royal Fusiliers (Major R. D. Garnons-Williams) and 7/Northamptonshire (Lieut.-Colonel A. Parkin). The withdrawal from Fosse Alley of the 27th Brigade and the loss of the Quarries by the 7th Division were now discovered, and at 3 A.M. therefore Br.-General Oswald formed with half of the 13/Middlesex (Colonel L. G. Oliver) a refused right flank along Slag Alley, the German communication trench south of the Dump, to connect with the 27th Brigade in Big Willie in the old German line. As a result of the night operations, the Quarries and Fosse Alley had been lost and the left half of the 7th Division was back in the old German line behind the Quarries.

NOTE.²

THE GERMANS DURING THE 25TH SEPTEMBER: THE ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS AND THE COUNTER-ATTACK AGAINST THE I. CORPS ON THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH/26TH SEPTEMBER

Sketch 29. The 25th September had been an anxious day for the enemy. The troops holding the front defences had in many places yielded so rapidly that at first it had been doubtful whether the weak reserves would have time to reach and man the second position before it too was entered by the British. During the morning and afternoon every preparation had in fact been made for the evacuation of the district for many miles behind the front of the reported gap between Loos and Auchy ;³ but, as the day wore on,

¹ The German failure is said to have been due to the men cheering too soon. ("Res. Regt. No. 91", p. 193.)

² Compiled from information supplied by the *Reichsarchiv* and from regimental histories.

³ As far back as Douai (German *IV. Corps* headquarters), "there were [at 4 P.M. 25th September] endless convoys of wagons formed up in "double lines ready to march away, and the wagons of the corps headquarters were also awaiting the order to move off. It was a sad picture "of retreat." (Extract from the diary of a captured German artillery officer.)

The *91st Reserve Regiment* marching up also found the transport

the situation improved. The defence put up about Lone Tree and Bois Carré, by delaying the centre of the British movement, had broken the first impetus of the offensive. All the local reserves, however, were soon put in. The reserve battalion of the *22nd Reserve Regiment*, half at Cité St. Auguste and half at Pont à Vendin, helped to occupy the second position between St. Laurent and St. Auguste throughout the day. Owing to the threat to Lens, this battalion had been reinforced during the morning by the local reserves of the *7th and 123rd Divisions (IV. Corps)*, holding the front west of Lens and Liévin, i.e., the supporting battalions of the *26th, 27th, 106th Reserve and 178th Regiments*. The battalion assisted in the re-capture of Hill 70 Redoubt during the afternoon. At nightfall it continued to hold the second position in this sector.

Immediately after the first assault the reserve battalion of the *157th Regiment* moved up from Pont à Vendin to the second position about Hulluch; half the battalion went to Hulluch itself and the other half to about Bois Hugo, as the position there was empty. Early in the afternoon a battalion of the *26th Regiment (7th Division)* arrived from its rest billets at Annay to strengthen this weak sector of the line and occupied it on either side of *Stützpunkt IV.* joining up with the *157th Regiment* to right and left.

The reserve battalion of the *11th Reserve Regiment* moved up from Wingles into Cité St. Elie during the morning, coming under fire on entering the village.¹ It held the second position in front of the village during the day.

The reserve battalion of the *16th Regiment*, together with the *11th Jäger Battalion*, occupied Cemetery Alley between Haisnes and Auchy immediately after the advance of the British 9th Division through Fosse 8. During the afternoon it assisted in forcing back the British troops from Pekin Trench, opposite Haisnes, to the Fosse 8 position.

Apart from the local reserves mentioned above, the only formed bodies of troops immediately available to reinforce the battle front opposite the British First Army were those in *Sixth Army* reserve: the *8th Division* of the *IV. Corps* near Lille, and the *2nd Guard Reserve Division* of the *X. Reserve Corps* about Douai.²

Immediately the news arrived of the British break-through north of Lens, the first care was to safeguard the flanks of the four-mile gap made in the front defences between Loos and Auchy. For this purpose nine infantry battalions, followed by seven more in support, were sent from the north of the canal and Douai to the northern flank of the gap about Haisnes; and six infantry battalions from Lens and neighbourhood to the southern flank about Bois Hugo and Cité St. Laurent.

facing east ready to retire, and noticed that "something extraordinary" must have happened. . . . There was talk of the successful attack of "the British after the gassing of our line, that had been shot to pieces by the bombardment of the previous days." ("Res. Regt. No. 91", p. 188.)

¹ See page 228.

² This division had been in rest near Cambrai since August. On the 21st September it was "alarmed" and moved towards Douai; on the 23rd some of its battalions were employed as working parties opposite the French front near Notre Dame de Lorette; during the night of the 24th/25th its regiments were kept in a state of immediate readiness with officers at the telephone to take orders.

25 Sept. The *8th Division* was ordered to send the *93rd* and *153rd Regiments* to help in the defence of the northern front of Lens. These were sent by rail and motor to Billy Montigny ($3\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of Lens), and thence marched to reinforce the troops in the second position: the *93rd Regiment* to Cité St. Laurent, taking up a position during the night between Hill 70 Redoubt and Loos Crassier; and the *153rd Regiment* to Cité St. Auguste, and east of Bois Hugo. These units, together with the local reserves already in position, now formed a strong defensive front from the Loos Crassier across Hill 70, including the redoubt, to the eastern end of Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo, and thereby assured the safety of Lens and the southern flank of the battle-front for the time being.

On the northern flank the units of the *2nd Guard Reserve Division* (*26th* and *38th Reserve Brigades*) were moved up during the afternoon and evening of the 25th, two regiments, the *15th Reserve* and *91st Reserve*, one from each of the two brigades, being sent by rail (the *91st Reserve* detraining at Meurchin 3 miles east of Hulluch under fire and the *15th Reserve* further back at Allennes 7 miles east of La Bassée) and road to the Haisnes—Cité St. Elie line. The remaining two regiments, the *55th Reserve* and *77th Reserve*, were moved up to Wingles and Douvrin in support. During the late evening a composite regiment (under Lieut.-Colonel Staubwasser) of the *II. Bavarian Corps*, consisting of a battalion each of the *9th*, *17th* and *18th Bavarian Regiments*, arrived in the *VII. Corps* zone from the north of Armentières by rail. It was put into the line at Haisnes. In addition, a battalion of the *55th Regiment* (*13th Division*) was sent south by road from Marquillies ($3\frac{1}{2}$ miles north-east of La Bassée) to Berclau ($3\frac{1}{4}$ miles east by south of La Bassée) as *VII. Corps* reserve.

Thus, in all, 22 additional battalions were moved into the battle area, and by daylight on the 26th the second position was more strongly held than the first had been at the time of the British assault.

The German artillery opposite the British front was not materially reinforced at this period, except by two field batteries of the *7th Division*, which were moved up to Cité St. Laurent. Apart from the loss of the advanced field batteries in Gun Trench and Loos, the remainder of the artillery, well-concealed, appears to have suffered very slightly during the fighting.

By nightfall the German fears of a complete break-through were temporarily set at rest. North of the canal the subsidiary attacks had ceased. South of the canal, between Haisnes and Loos, the British had not pressed the offensive beyond the Lens—La Bassée road, and the weakly held second position was still in German hands. The advance across Hill 70, threatening Lens, had been checked by the reserves of the *7th Division*, holding the line south of the Double Crassier: as no attack had been made on their front, they were able to devote their energies to the defence of the northern suburbs of Lens. Southwards between Lens and Arras the assault of the French Tenth Army against the defences on the Vimy plateau amounted to little more, it seemed, than a demonstration of its left wing, and had not occasioned any difficulty.

Orders for the re-capture of the lost positions were issued as early as 3 P.M. on the 25th by the *IV. Corps* (General Sixt von Armin). This counter-offensive was to take the form of two simul-

taneous attacks directed inwards from the flanks of the gap. On 25/26 the southern flank the *8th Division* was to attack across Hill 70 Sept. and through Loos. On the northern flank the *117th Division*, reinforced by the *2nd Guard Reserve Division* from the north of the canal, was to attack from Haisnes and Cité St. Elie on a front Fosse 8—The Quarries—Gun Trench. It was dark, however, before the units detailed for the southern attack, towards Loos, reached their places of assembly, and owing to the difficulty of reconnoitring the new British position on Hill 70, the operation, except for the local attack near Loos Crassier, was postponed till the following morning, the 26th, when, as will be seen, it was to interfere in a vital manner with the offensive of the 21st and 24th Divisions. On the other hand, the preparations for the northern attack against the new line of the I. Corps about the Quarries and Fosse 8 were more easily made, and it was delivered, as we have seen, soon after midnight. Moving in a south-westerly direction from the front Cité St. Elie—Haisnes the *15th Reserve Regiment* attacked Gun Trench; the *III. Battalion* of the *91st Reserve* and parts of the *11th Reserve Regiment*, the Quarries; and the *I. Battalion* of the *91st Reserve*, with part of the *II.* and four companies of the *55th Reserve Regiment*, Fosse 8. The approach march was not interfered with by fire, and surprise was achieved except at Fosse 8, where the men began to cheer when they were still a hundred yards from the British line, and thus gave warning of the attack. Attempts to continue the advance beyond the Quarries “were brought to a stop by the stout defence of the “enemy” (“Res. Regt. No. 91”, p. 193). Elsewhere no progress could be made and none of the original line was recovered.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

26TH SEPTEMBER

THE ATTACK AGAINST THE GERMAN SECOND LINE BETWEEN LENS AND HULLUCH

(Sketches 29, 30, 31, 32, 33)

THE FIRST ARMY ORDERS FOR THE 26TH

Sketches 29, 30. WHEN night fell on the 25th General Haig had to come to a decision as to his further course of action. Knowing nothing of the heavy losses, or of the gap in the 1st Division front, his appreciation of the situation was that the Germans, beaten and driven from their main line of defence, were holding a weak back line between Cité St. Auguste and Haisnes;¹ and that a determined attack by the 21st and 24th Divisions south of Hulluch would pierce this back line and thereby turn the whole German position, including perhaps the town of Lens itself.

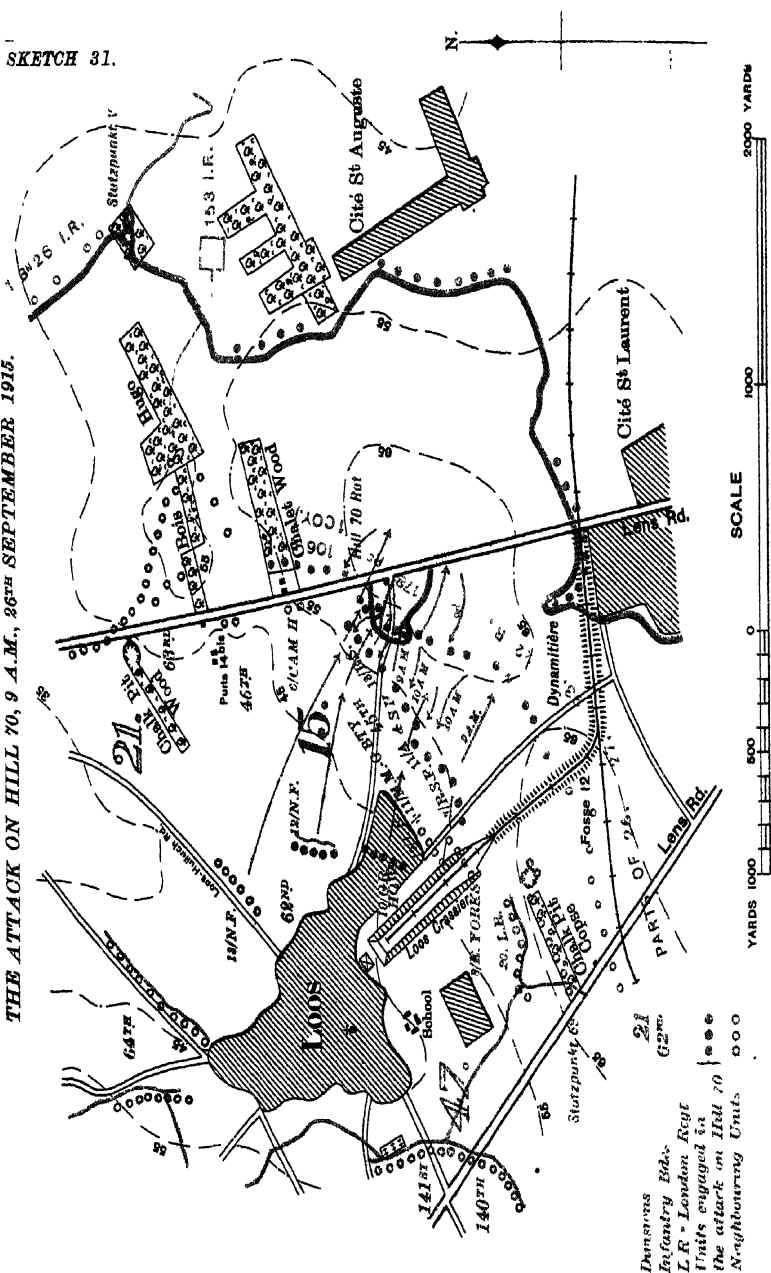
The difficulty in arriving at a plan of action for the 26th September and continuing the vigorous attack desired by the Secretary of State for War lay in the uncertainty as to whether the French Tenth Army would do anything. Although General d'Urbal had declared his intention of continuing the battle on all his front, the reports from the French front on the evening of the 25th showed that the French Tenth Army had failed to force back the Germans

¹ The Trench Map showing the German trenches, and based on aeroplane reconnaissance, in use at the battle was not complete. It marked by a thick line the German second position from Haisnes to beyond La Bassée. South of Haisnes there was a gap to Cité St. Elie, then a thin line—meaning that there was less than a complete trench with wire in front of it—doubled by a second one, at places, as far as the back of Bois Hugo; then another gap. The flank from Cité St. Auguste to the Dynamitière and the redoubt on Hill 70 were well indicated.

LOOS

THE ATTACK ON HILL 70, 9 A.M., 26TH SEPTEMBER 1915.

SKETCH 31.



from Vimy ridge. It would therefore require an advance of over three miles to bring the French troops south of Lens abreast of the new British front. Until this was done, a break-through by the British north of the town ran great risk of developing into an isolated operation unsupported on its southern flank. As a result of the failure of the Tenth Army, two out of the nine divisions available, the 47th and 15th, would have to be employed to protect this flank. On the other hand, a British success would certainly ease the way for the French, and, for this reason alone, an attempt to push on should be made.

The orders for a renewed offensive were sent out in the form of a message from First Army Headquarters at 11.30 P.M. They directed a general assault at 11 A.M. next day on the whole front from Hill 70 to Cité St. Elie (north-west of Hulluch). The dominating idea in the orders, which General Haig explained further at a meeting with his three corps commanders at 9 A.M. on the 26th, was the continuation of the advance of the 21st and 24th Divisions through the German weak second position between Bois Hugo and Hulluch, and thence to the line of the Haute Deule canal, the flanks of this advance being supported by the capture of Hill 70 on the right and of Hulluch and Cité St. Elie on the left. The 15th Division, with the 62nd Brigade (XI. Corps) attached, was to capture Hill 70 and establish a defensive flank there. The 1st Division was to attack Hulluch, and the I. Corps was simultaneously to attack Cité St. Elie.¹

In a subsequent correspondence on the employment of the 21st and 24th Divisions, Sir John French commented very strongly to General Haig on "the futility of pushing "reserves through a narrow gap in the enemy's defences". At the time, however, from loyalty to the Government and

¹ "Following attacks will take place to-morrow—26th instant—after an "adequate artillery preparation. IV. Corps with one brigade of 21st "Division (XI. Corps) will attack the redoubt on Hill 70 at an hour to be "arranged by G.O.C. IV. Corps. 1st Division of IV. Corps will attack "Hulluch at 11 A.M. I. Corps will attack Cité St. Elie at 11 A.M. XI. "Corps (less one brigade attached to I. Corps and one brigade to IV. Corps) "will attack the German second line between Hulluch and Cité St. Auguste "at 11 A.M. and push on and secure the high ground between Harnes and "Pont à Vendin. The I. and IV. Corps should communicate direct so as "to render the attacks on Hulluch and Cité St. Elie simultaneous. No. 1 "Group H.A.R. will support the attack of the IV. Corps and XI. Corps. "No. 5 Group H.A.R. will support the attack of the I. Corps. The I., "III. and Indian Corps will continue to operate in such a manner north of "the canal as to pin the enemy to his ground and prevent him despatching "reserves south of the canal."

26 Sept. his Allies, he laid no restraining hand on the course of the battle,¹ although he visited General Haig at noon on the 26th. He then informed the commander of the First Army that he was sending up the Guards Division to be at his orders, withdrawing the 15th Division into general reserve in its place.

IV. CORPS : 15TH DIVISION FAILURE TO RECAPTURE HILL 70

Sketch 31. The weather throughout Sunday the 26th was unfavourable and worse than on the 25th; there was mist, low cloud and rain, and in consequence the fighting troops received little assistance from the air, except indirectly from the bombing of two ammunition trains and the locomotive sheds at Valenciennes, and the derailment of two trains in that area.

In the very early hours of the day, General Rawlinson (IV. Corps) and General Haking (XI. Corps) met to discuss the details of the plan so far as it concerned their corps, that is—the attack on Cité St. Elie having being allotted by the First Army message to the I. Corps—the attacks on Hill 70 and Hulluch and the German position between them. They decided, since an advance by the 21st and 24th Divisions beyond the Lens—La Bassée road could be observed in every detail and enfiladed from the German redoubt on Hill 70, that the troops holding the western slope of the hill should attack the redoubt at 9 A.M. and gain possession of the summit before the main assault at 11 A.M.

The orders from the 15th Division for this preliminary move reached the brigades concerned at 5 A.M.:—"The 45th and 62nd Brigades will attack Hill 70 at 9 A.M. to-day. 45th Brigade will attack from the west with its left on the track from Loos through the Hill 70 Redoubt to the Lens—La Bassée road. The 62nd Brigade will attack from the north-west with its right on the same track. The attack will be preceded by an hour's intense bombardment by all available guns [that is of the 15th Division artillery], and artillery barrages will be established on the enemy's trenches south and

¹ At "First" and "Second" Ypres when there were no substantial reserves on the Allied side to deal with intruders, the enemy showed that there was everything to gain by exploiting weak places and pushing detachments on through gaps, to turn and take in rear the defenders of the parts of the line that were still held.

“east of Hill 70 during and after the attack. Hill 70, 26 Sept.
“when taken, will be strengthened and held to cover the
“advance of the 21st and 24th Divisions against the
“enemy’s position between Cité St. Auguste and Hulluch.
“44th and 46th Brigades will remain in their present
“positions¹ ready to support the 45th and 62nd Brigades,
“respectively, if required. Before the bombardment of
“the Hill 70 Redoubt begins the infantry will be with-
“drawn to a safe distance. 45th Brigade will keep touch
“with the left of the 47th Division throughout.”

In the early morning, on receipt of these orders, Br.-Generals Wallerston and Wilkinson, commanding the brigades detailed to attack, conferred at the former’s headquarters. The 45th Brigade was at this time astride the track leading to the redoubt, named in the orders as its left boundary; and, owing to the situation, it was not considered possible, without an undesirable risk, to assemble the brigade on the south side of the track. The two brigade commanders therefore decided to deliver the assault from the present positions of their formations. The 45th Brigade was to make a frontal one astride the track against the redoubt and the summit of the hill with its three battalions which were already in the line:—the 7/R. Scots Fusiliers on the right past the southern flank of the redoubt and against the southern face; the 11/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders against the centre of the work; and the 13/Royal Scots against its northern face and northern flank. The 62nd Brigade was to move up from Loos and act in immediate support.

The co-operation in the attack by the divisional artillery was not easy to arrange. The two batteries of the LXXI. Brigade R.F.A., which had moved forward the previous day into the Loos valley to a position west of the village, about the cemetery, had been joined during the night by two howitzer batteries of the LXXIII. Brigade, which were sent forward through Loos to a position north-east of the village along the Loos—Hulluch road. The blocked and broken condition of the Béthune—Lens road, kept under constant German artillery fire from Lens, made the efforts of Colonel S. D’A. Crookshank, the C.R.E. of the 47th Division, to clear it unavailing;² and it soon seemed

¹ The 44th Brigade was in reserve in the old British line; the 46th partly in the line on the left of the division near Chalet Wood, partly in reserve. Both brigades, it will be recalled, had lost heavily.

² It was not cleared until the night of the 27th/28th.

26 Sept. that difficulties of sending forward ammunition in any quantity might be insurmountable.¹ For this reason the rest of the 15th Divisional Artillery (Br.-General E. W. Alexander), that is, the LXX. and LXXII. Brigades, the remainder of the LXXI. and LXXIII. Brigades and the 5th Siege Battery, were ordered to support the Hill 70 attack from their original positions about Fosse 7, North Maroc and Mazingarbe. The bombardment of the redoubt was to be carried out at an approximate rate of two rounds per minute per battery, but no instructions were given as regards shelling the German second position beyond the redoubt from which the attack had been repelled on the previous day.

The orders did not reach battalion commanders till after 7 A.M., only an hour before the bombardment was due to begin; and in one case at least not until nearly 8 A.M. Then there was further delay: the units of the 45th Brigade were still much scattered and intermingled on the western slopes of the hill, and, owing to the situation, it had not been found possible to re-group them during the night; and lateral communication along the line was most difficult as the position consisted, for the most part, of a series of shelter-pits rather than a continuous trench. In spite of every effort of the signal personnel to get the necessary instructions to all concerned, some of the companies of the 11/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Lieut.-Colonel M. McNeill) and the 13/Royal Scots (Lieut.-Colonel H. Maclear), both of the 45th Brigade—in the centre and, on the left of the line—and the one company of the 13/Northumberland Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel Lord Crofton) of the 62nd Brigade in the first line, did not receive them until after the bombardment had begun.

The fire of the artillery was accurate despite the difficulty of observation through the heavy morning mist. Nevertheless, a number of shells fell along the British front line, which the batteries had been informed would be temporarily evacuated, the 13/Royal Scots in particular having casualties. Those companies which had not received the warning to withdraw during the shelling and had remained in position were therefore somewhat shaken

¹ During the attack on Hill 70, the attempts to get ammunition wagons forward through Loos to the two howitzer batteries north-east of the village were stopped by superior order. After the batteries had fired all the ammunition they had taken with them, the men were withdrawn, and the guns left in position on the Loos—Hulluch road till recovered after dark on the night of the 26th/27th.

and not perhaps able to take such a vigorous part in the 26 Sept. assault as they might otherwise have done.

Towards the end of the period of the bombardment the mist suddenly cleared, so that, at 9 A.M., when the three battalions of the 45th Brigade charged forward, two companies of the 8/East Yorkshire on and near Loos Crassier joining in on their right, they could be clearly seen by the Germans posted along the crest of the hill.¹ The redoubt and the position on either side of it had been strengthened during the night, and the short bombardment had only partially prepared it for assault. Parties of the attacking battalions nevertheless succeeded in entering its perimeter trench, and in hand-to-hand fighting they killed or drove out most of the garrison. A number of Germans retired, running back across the open towards Cité St. Auguste, but a few managed to maintain their hold on the keep in the centre of the work. The 45th Brigade now tried to press on; but any advance past the flanks of the redoubt was found impossible, each attempt being completely foiled by a heavy cross-fire from both sides and by artillery fire from Lens and Cité St. Auguste. Under the hail of shell and bullets the lines seemed to wither away, and those attackers who did not fall were compelled to withdraw behind the crest-line, Colonel Way (8/East Yorkshire) being severely wounded.

The two remaining battalions of the 62nd Brigade now arrived in support.² The 10/Green Howards (Colonel A. de S. Hadow) and 12/Northumberland Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel H. B. Warwick), advancing from their assembly positions east of Loos, to the right and left respectively of the Loos—Hill 70 Redoubt track, had followed two hundred yards in rear of the 45th Brigade as soon as the assault took place. They were uncertain as to the direction they should take, for, having only small scale maps on which Hill 70 was indistinctly marked as a small ring contour, Loos Crassier, not on the map, was, in the bad

¹ The redoubt itself was held by some two hundred men of the *178th Regiment*, whilst towards Loos Crassier were two battalions of the *93rd Regiment* that had dug in during the night, and towards Chalet Wood a new line had been occupied by a battalion of the *106th Reserve Regiment*. See Note at end of Chapter XVI.

² It has been authoritatively stated that there was only one officer of all the four thousand officers and men of the 62nd Brigade who had any previous experience of the war. On the march up to Loos, under shell fire for the first time, the men of the Northumberland Fusiliers, owing to a miners' superstition, would not take cover in a trench because there were dead men in it.

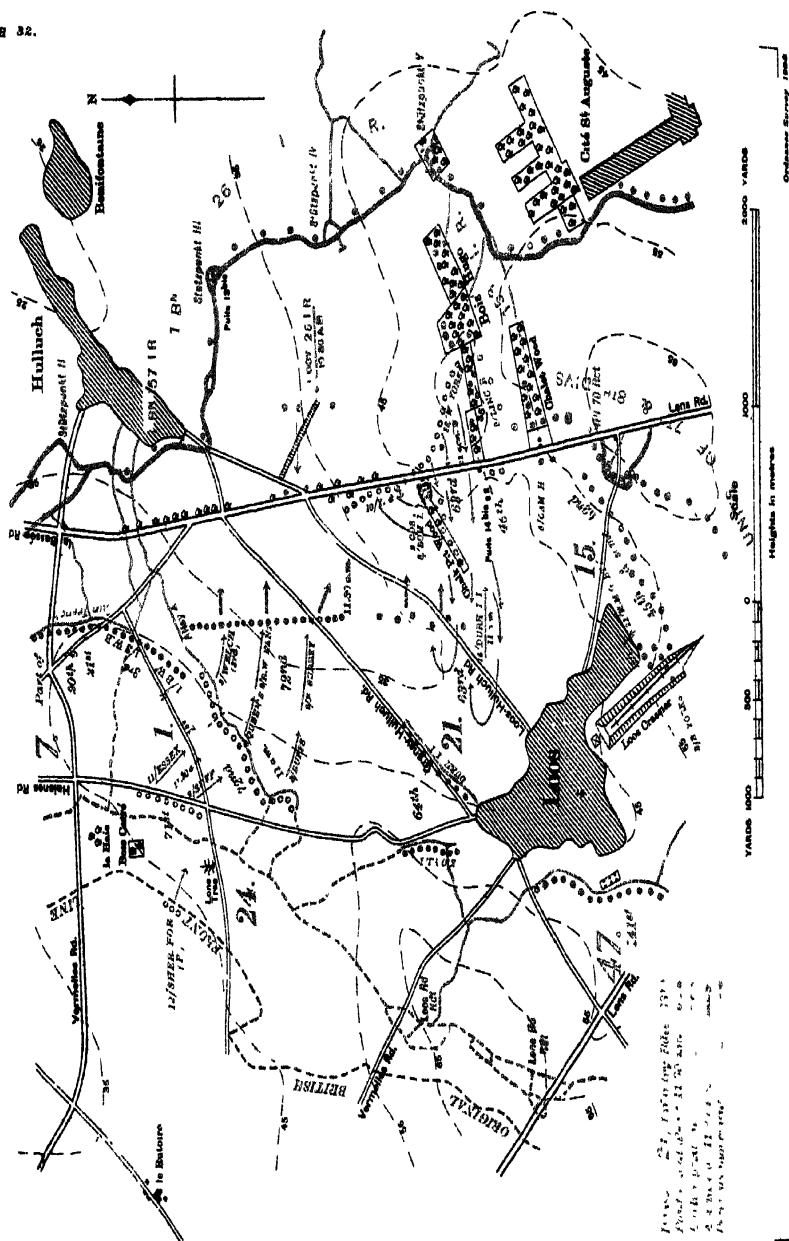
26 Sept. light, mistaken for it. They now, however, came forward and carried the wavering lines a second time towards the redoubt and over the crest-line on either side of it. The fire that was encountered again proved too heavy, and first individuals and then parties began to drift back. The officers tried to rouse the men to another effort to take the redoubt and nearly succeeded. A staff officer who was present is of opinion that if only the "charge" could have been sounded—and heard—all would have gone well. But in exposing themselves to encourage the men, a large proportion of the officers fell¹; and soon after 10 A.M. the greater part of the troops were fast dropping back into the shelter-pits on the western slope from which the attack had started. The Germans left in the redoubt now took heart and advanced from the central keep and rear part of the work. Bombing forward down the perimeter trench they forced the small party of various regiments that had entered to evacuate it.

Units of both brigades were now very intermingled, the men exhausted after the trials of the previous twenty-four hours, and suffering from lack of water and a thirst increased by the nature of the reserve ration which they had been driven to eat. The renewed efforts of the officers to organize another assault against the summit of the hill therefore met with little response. About 11 A.M. the German artillery near Lens and Cité St. Auguste began a heavy bombardment of the British line, using occasional gas shell. In their tired condition, this had a most unsettling effect on the men, and caused many to leave the front and retire through Loos, regardless of remonstrances and efforts to rally them made by their officers and by the engineers who were putting the village in a state of defence. A thin line, chiefly men of the 45th and 46th Brigades, however, remained holding the front position on the reverse slope below the crest of the hill. On their right the survivors of two companies of the 8/East Yorkshire and stragglers collected by the 1/20th London continued to hold a position astride the Loos Crassier in touch with the left of the 47th Division south of Loos. On the left, opposite to and in Chalet Wood were remnants of the 46th

¹ Particularly in the case of the 10/Green Howards, whose commander and three senior officers were all killed in a few minutes whilst animating their men by example. First Colonel Hadow got up and rushed forward shouting "charge", and was killed; then Major W. H. Dent rose and did the same, and was killed, and the next two senior officers met the same fate in the same manner.

SOOS

ATTACK ON 31st & 24th DIVISIONS UP TO 11:30 A M 26TH SEPTEMBER 1916.



Brigade, the strongest unit of which was the attached 26 Sept. 6/Cameron Highlanders (45th Brigade).

XI. CORPS: THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE ASSAULT BY THE 21ST AND 24TH DIVISIONS ON THE GERMAN SECOND POSITION BETWEEN BOIS HUGO AND HULLUCH

The failure to capture Hill 70 and the fact that the *Sketch* village of Hulluch was still in enemy hands did not cause ^{32.} General Haking to change his plan for the attack by the 21st and 24th Divisions between these two localities. He had the reasonable expectation that the 1st Division would secure Hulluch and that, if the German second position were broken through between Bois Hugo and Hulluch, the Hill 70 position could readily be outflanked and enveloped, and the whole of that sector of the front carried. His orders for the attack, therefore, held good; but, to confirm any success of the 21st and 24th Divisions, and to assist in the capture either of Hill 70 or Hulluch should one or other of these places remain in German hands, he sent orders to the Guards Division at 10.5 A.M.—which did not, however, reach brigades until nearly midday—to move forward to the original British trenches south of the Vermelles—Hulluch road.

As already noticed, the German second position between Bois Hugo and Puits 13 bis south-east of Hulluch, formed the "curtain" of a great bastioned front, the two flanks being, on the south, Cité St. Auguste with Hill 70, and, on the north, the trench running from Puits 13 bis to the southern end of Hulluch; whilst Bois Hugo stretched out as a "caponier" between them. This "curtain", a front of just a mile, that the XI. Corps was asked to reach, lay back some thousand yards east of the Lens road along the eastern slope of the Cité ridge. The attack therefore involved a long advance over a bare and open stretch of ground, enfiladed from both flanks and from Bois Hugo. Though consisting of only a single trench, the German second position was now—though the trench map did not show it—complete, and protected by a particularly strong barbed wire entanglement 4 feet high and fifteen to twenty feet broad,¹ and at its ends and in its centre were

¹ According to the statement of a German officer to an officer prisoner, this entanglement had been constructed during the night of the 25th/26th, and had the British attacked on the previous evening they would have found the line only thinly held, and would have got in. According to British officers who saw it, the wire was the strongest obstacle they met, "masses of wire, quite untouched".

26 Sept. strong closed works (*Stützpunkte III., IV. and V.*), with a number of concrete machine-gun emplacements. In its essentials, the position was, in fact, as formidable as the original German front, but unlike the latter had not been under bombardment for four days and nights, nor could the assault on it be preceded by a discharge of gas. Moreover, the arrival of reinforcements during the night¹ had increased the garrison of this sector of the position to approximately six battalions;² the position was therefore held in proportionately greater strength than had been the German front defences on the previous day.

In the attack, to begin at 11 A.M., the 21st Division was to advance against the part of the position from Bois Hugo to *Stützpunkt IV.* (inclusive); the 24th Division, against the sector from this redoubt to Puits 13 bis. The 1st Division, by the capture of Hulluch, was to secure the left flank; but the right flank, which was to have been—but could not now be—covered by the 15th Division on Hill 70, was unprotected.

The artillery of the 21st and 24th Divisions which now, according to the usage of the time, took over the front to be attacked by its infantry, was combined under the command of Br.-General C. H. Alexander of the 21st Division. The preliminary bombardment was to last only one hour. The I. and XV. Brigades R.G.A. of No. 1 Group H.A.R. were also to participate in the support of the attack and were allotted two hundred rounds of 6-inch and ninety rounds of 9.2-inch shell. Under cover of darkness, the batteries of the two divisions were to move forward with orders to reach before daylight a position behind Lone Tree ridge, between the Béthune—Lens and the Vermelles—Hulluch roads. As already pointed out, however, the artillery brigades of the 24th Division were in action, and the getting them out of the line and in touch again with their own formation, took up most of the night. Every infantry brigade having apparently ordered its vehicles to be at Le Rutoire, as the only place that could be identified on the featureless plain, the mass of transport wagons on the way thither both at Philosophe and at Vermelles led to much confusion in the darkness

¹ See Note at end of Chapter XVI.

² One composite battalion of the 157th Regiment in Hulluch, one battalion of the 26th Regiment between Hulluch and *Stützpunkt IV.*, three battalions of the 153rd Regiment south of *Stützpunkt IV.* through Bois Hugo to Cité St. Auguste, and one battalion of the 22nd Reserve Regiment in Cité St. Auguste.

and interfered very considerably with the passage of the 26 Sept. batteries. In consequence, many of them did not reach their destinations till 7 and 8 A.M., instead of before daylight, and positions had to be taken up haphazard in the thick mist then enveloping the battlefield. When this cleared, about 9 A.M., the majority of the batteries found themselves some thousand yards in rear of the positions intended. Instead of being under cover of Lone Tree ridge, that is, along the eastern slope of the big saucer-shaped depression between the Vermelles—Hulluch and Béthune—Lens roads, they were on the western slope of the depression, west and south-west of Le Rutoire. It was quite useless, even absurd, to try to hide themselves by planting branches of trees: the flashes of all were visible to the enemy and some of them were in full view of the German batteries about Haisnes and Hulluch. These opened on them immediately, and continued the fire with increasing intensity throughout the morning. It was considered too late to alter the battery dispositions, and, in these difficult circumstances, the bombardment of the German second line before the advance was spasmodic and unsystematic, little more than a few ranging shots being fired by the field artillery, and no great amount by the heavy artillery.

The engineers of the 21st and 24th Divisions did not take part in the assault, as they were warned that their heavy work would come in the bridging of the Haute Deule canal. Meanwhile the field companies, under their C.R.E.s Lieut.-Colonels Clifford Coffin and A. J. Craven, were employed in improving communications, only the 104th Field Company of the 24th Division being warned to follow the 72nd Brigade and consolidate the positions won.

THE GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK THROUGH BOIS HUGO

Not only for the artillery, but also for the infantry of the 21st and 24th Divisions, the conditions under which the attack was to be launched were most unfavourable from the outset. The men, wet through, had passed a sleepless and trying night, and this after a series of night marches. In spite of tremendous efforts, it had been impossible to bring the ration wagons and cookers up to the battalions. The quartermasters had made many attempts during the night to get in touch with their units,

26 Sept. but, after wandering aimlessly in the dark through the mud and débris of the battlefield, they had, with few exceptions, abandoned the search.¹ The leaders were in an even more unhappy state of mind than their men, for there was a complete absence of information as to the general situation and the exact position of the various battalions.

Besides these many disadvantages, the late hour of the attack, 11 A.M., gave the Germans an opportunity of forestalling it on the front of the 21st Division, and making the counter-attack from the south-east, postponed because reinforcements had arrived too late on the previous day.² During the night small enemy reconnoitring parties had worked their way forward from Cité St. Auguste through the two strips of wood, Bois Hugo and Chalet Wood, and early in the morning these parties were strengthened by larger bodies of infantry.³ The 63rd Brigade had not occupied Bois Hugo when it relieved the 2nd Brigade,⁴ but there was still a Cameron post on the south side of the wood, and a Northamptonshire one, overlooked when its battalion was withdrawn, on the north; but these were overwhelmed, and the Germans penetrated to the western portions of Bois Hugo and Chalet Wood bordering the Lens—La Bassée road. Here they were in the midst of the 63rd Brigade, the leading brigade of the 21st Division. As soon as the mist cleared, about 9 A.M., these enemy parties made their presence felt, and unfortunately two batteries near the Loos—Hulluch road, to which the men of the 6/Camerons, still at Puits 14 bis, appealed for help, were out of ammunition. The three companies of the 8/Lincolnshire (63rd Brigade) south of Bois Hugo, began to lose heavily and its fourth company, north of the wood,

¹ Efforts to get the cookers to the men were carried on all through the evening and night, but failed owing to congestion on the roads, darkness and rain. Only the 72nd Brigade (24th Division) got a hot breakfast on the 26th, its cookers having got to Le Rutoire. Other troops had to content themselves with the special rations they carried on them. Want of water, however, tried them more than lack of hot or accustomed food.

² See Note at end of Chapter XVI.

³ Three battalions of the 153rd Regiment and part of the 106th.

⁴ Extract from diary of 12/West Yorkshire (63rd Brigade): "A Scottish regiment of the 15th Division [6/Cameron Highlanders] was in possession of Puits 14 bis and our 62nd Brigade had been lent to the same division for a fresh attempt on Hill 70. It was the knowledge of all these troops on the south side of the wood which influenced the battalion commander in not extending his line into the wood and so protecting his own flank with his own men. A sergeant and 12 men were sent into the wood in front of the right of the line." Nothing further appears to have been heard of this patrol.

enfiladed at close range, had to fall back to the Lens road 26 Sept. with many casualties.

To meet the new situation, Br.-General Nickalls (63rd Brigade) ordered two companies of the 8/Somerset L.I., in brigade reserve in the Chalk Pit, to line the southern edge of the pit facing Bois Hugo. He also sent a message to the 10/York and Lancaster which was entrenched along the Lens road north of the Chalk Pit, to move two companies across to the southern edge of Chalk Pit Wood to face south-east, so as to prevent any German advance across the Lens road from either Bois Hugo or Chalet Wood. By a misunderstanding, all four companies of the York and Lancaster went not only into the wood, but in many cases beyond it; and, forced to lie down in the open in front of Bois Hugo, they incurred heavy losses. Br.-General Nickalls also wrote a hurried note (8.53 A.M.) to Br.-General Gloster, commanding the 64th Brigade, in support behind him, asking for a battalion to reinforce his right flank, which, he said, was being pressed by a German attack. The 14/Durham L.I. was therefore sent forward in the direction of Puits 14 bis and Bois Hugo.

Before these movements had been completed the German counter-attack from the second position between Cité St. Auguste and Hulluch developed more fully.¹ Shortly before 9.30 A.M. the German artillery in and behind Hulluch and Cité St. Auguste began a heavy bombardment of all the trenches of the 63rd Brigade about the Chalk Pit and Chalk Pit Wood. About 10 A.M. this bombardment ceased, and a number of German infantry were seen to advance half-heartedly from the direction of *Stützpunkt IV.* across the open, north of Bois Hugo. This advance, in lines at one hundred to two hundred yards distance, threatened the open left flank of the 63rd Brigade, north of the Chalk Pit, but the British field batteries, east of Vermelles, were quick to range upon it, and, together with the rifle fire of the West Yorkshire, brought it to a standstill before it could reach the Lens road.² Nevertheless,

¹ The 117th Division order, issued at 9.45 A.M. (British time) on this day (26th) begins: "The line Fosse 8 mine-dump—Quarries has been captured. Gun Trench, west of Hulluch, has been reached by parts of the 15th Reserve Infantry Regiment. The 8th Division in its attack on Loos has reached with its right wing the strip of wood north-west of Puits 14 bis, and a position about two hundred yards east of Loos. The general direction of attack of this division is westwards."

² This movement is explained by paragraph 3 of the 117th Division order:—

"The 233rd Infantry Brigade will prepare one company for attack from

26 Sept. this advance in the open, though weak in numbers, had drawn the attention of the 63rd Brigade and of the supporting artillery, and diverted it from the main German forward movement through and under cover of Bois Hugo. About 10.30 A.M. the front and support trenches of the West Yorkshire, north of the wood, engaged in firing on the enemy crossing its front, were suddenly enfiladed from the eastern edge. Completely surprised and suffering many casualties, the majority of the men left the trenches and ran back towards the Lens road. Unfortunately Lieut.-Colonel Leggett, the battalion commander, on his way to Br.-General Nickalls's headquarters at Chalk Pit House to receive orders at 10 A.M., had just been wounded by a shell, and efforts by other officers to rally the men along the Lens road and in the Chalk Pit, under a continuous rifle and machine-gun fire from Bois Hugo, were of no avail. Br.-General Nickalls himself ran forward from Chalk Pit House to assist, but was killed almost immediately. His loss at such a critical moment was irreparable. Many of the West Yorkshire continued their retirement across the Lens road and past the southern front of Chalk Pit Wood, and the sight of men leaving the front misled the remainder of the brigade in this their first battle. The York and Lancaster, lying out in front of the wood, rose as the retreating men reached them and joined in their rearward movement; so also did the majority of the Lincolnshire, when they found Germans behind them, though without anything in the nature of a panic; but the two companies of the Somerset L.I. in the Chalk Pit held on. The Germans did not follow from Bois Hugo, for, as they

"the second position with its left flank on *Stützpunkt IV*. The object of this company is to close the gap between the 26th Reserve Infantry Brigade and the 8th Infantry Division, and it will drive back any British troops east of the La Bassée—Lens road to a sector between those two units, forcing them beyond the road. For this purpose, it will advance in thin lines of skirmishers to the La Bassée—Lens road, where it will dig in. Its further progress will be dependent on the 26th Reserve Infantry Brigade and the 8th Infantry Division."

It was carried out by a company of the 26th Regiment. The regimental history says:—"The company was to advance to the Lens—La Bassée road, dig in and remain there, so as to close the gap between the 26th Reserve Infantry Brigade on the right and the 8th Division advancing through Bois Hugo on the left. At 10.15 A.M. the company advanced in widely extended lines, the left from *Stützpunkt IV*., and the right from Fosse 13. On reaching the road it was attacked by about two British battalions, who advanced to within about seventy yards, when it was decided to fall back on the second line trench. This was done with considerable loss, with British following close behind."

came out of it in one great mass, five heavy shells fell right into the thick of them, and they turned round and fled back into the wood. 26 Sept.

Just as the retirement became definite the battalion of the 64th Brigade—the 14/Durham L.I.—that had been sent forward at Br.-General Nickalls's request to support his right, was advancing from the Loos—Hulluch road towards Bois Hugo, and, perhaps owing to the fact that many of the British were wearing long greatcoats, it mistook the retreating men for Germans advancing from the wood, and opened fire on them. The error was soon discovered, and the Durham L.I. continued to go forward passing through the retiring men; but they encountered heavy machine-gun fire, particularly enfilade fire from Bois Hugo. After losing 17 officers, including Lieut.-Colonel A. S. Hamilton, the adjutant, all four company commanders and the machine-gun officer, and 220 other ranks, they were driven back. The 15/Durham Light Infantry now appeared on the scene. Exactly at 11 A.M., conforming to the orders for a general attack at that hour, Lieut.-Colonel E. T. Logan led his battalion forward, and was shortly afterwards killed. Like the 14/Durham L.I. it passed through the retiring lines; some parties reached the foot of Hill 70, but, like its sister battalion, it was in the end driven back. Thus it seemed that the fighting power of the 63rd and 64th Brigades, that is of the 21st Division—for the 62nd Brigade was detached with the 15th Division—was already broken.

THE 24TH DIVISION ADVANCE ACROSS THE LENS ROAD

At the moment when the retrograde movement was beginning on the front of the 21st Division, further north the leading brigade, the 72nd (Br.-General Mitford), of the 24th Division was about to advance. At daybreak this brigade was occupying the communication trench Alley 4, east of Lone Tree, its left in touch with the 1st Division. Its presence had been noticed by the enemy, and from time to time it was shelled. The 71st Brigade, short of the two battalions with the I. Corps, was in support in the old German front trench about Lone Tree; the 73rd Brigade was still with the 9th Division at Fosse 8. Thus it came about that the attack of the 24th Division was made by six battalions instead of its full force: in fact, by the 72nd Brigade reinforced by two battalions of the 71st. Sketch 32.

26 Sept. At 5 A.M., no orders having arrived, Major Sir W. Kay, the divisional staff officer lent to Br.-General Mitford, had been sent back to divisional headquarters at Vermelles to report the position of the 71st and 72nd Brigades, and to ask for further instructions. At 9.45 A.M. he returned with the information that the divisional orders had been sent, but as they had not arrived—they did not do so until 5.30 P.M.—he delivered the substance verbally. They were to the effect that the 72nd Brigade was to move at 11 A.M. and attack the German second position between *Stützpunkt IV.* (exclusive), and Puits 13 bis (*Stützpunkt III.*); the two battalions, 11/Essex and 9/Suffolk, of the 71st Brigade were to remain in their present position as reserve, and the 2/Welch of the 1st Division on the left would attack Hulluch.¹ Br.-General Mitford therefore assembled his battalion commanders and directed the advance to be carried out with two battalions, 9/East Surrey (Lieut.-Colonel F. L. Sanders) and 8/Royal West Kent (Colonel E. Vansittart), in first line, and two battalions, the 8/Buffs (Colonel F. C. Romer) and 8/Queen's (Lieut.-Colonel F. H. Fairtlough), in support.

It was about ten minutes to eleven before the battalion commanders of the 72nd Brigade could get back to their units, and later before those of the 71st could do so; and they then had to give their instructions and organize the advance. Nevertheless, although somewhat hustled, the two leading battalions left their trenches about a thousand yards west of the La Bassée road exactly at 11 A.M.² They could not have reached the road by this hour, even had they known that it was intended by the divisional commander that they should. The advance down the slope from Lone Tree ridge into the Loos valley, which required a quarter-circle change of front to the left in order to get parallel to the objective, was carried out in excellent order and alignment, the men being delighted at

¹ The actual orders received at 5.30 P.M. ran :—" G.80 to 72nd Brigade, " 26th : Following arrangements for attack. 1st Division attacks Hulluch " 11 A.M., 72nd Brigade to attack second line trench between Puits 13 bis " (south-east of Hulluch) and the redoubt exclusive. 21st Division will " attack on your right against redoubt and continuation of the trench " south of it to Bois Hugo. The attack will be preceded by an artillery " bombardment. The attack will cross the Lens—La Bassée road at " 11 A.M. From 24th Division, 7.10 A.M."

² The other two battalions of the 72nd were in a trench 150-200 yards east of the Loos—Haisnes road, the two battalions of the 71st along that road north-west of them, and the divisional Pioneer battalion in the old British front trench.

the prospect of getting at the enemy after the exertions and discomforts of the preceding days. The precision of their movement had the effect of steadying the mass of the 63rd Brigade on the right, which at that moment was in full retreat from the Chalk Pit and Bois Hugo across the Loos—Hulluch road. The majority of the men turned and faced the front again, and, as the leading battalions of the 72nd Brigade, the East Surrey and West Kent, completed the change of front and began their advance in fighting formation, the men of the 63rd Brigade and those of the 64th with them, began to retrace their steps. Shortly after 11 A.M. therefore a reaction had set in, and the situation appeared to have righted itself. The advance of the 72nd Brigade continued, and that of the 63rd was begun in the required direction; but, owing to the fall of Br.-General Nickalls and the temporary dislocation of the 63rd Brigade headquarters, there was a complete lack of guidance for its battalions. They had not even objectives assigned to them and, in their intermixed condition after the retirement, their participation in the advance was not a well considered and organized movement. Of the two supporting battalions belonging to the 64th Brigade, one, the 14/Durham L.I., had been completely broken in its efforts to stem the retirement, and the other, the 15/Durham L.I., had moved towards Hill 70 and was on the point of breaking; two battalions of the 71st Brigade were still in hand. Thus the attack of the 21st and 24th Divisions, with the weight of 24 battalions, which was to drive through the German second position, had dwindled down to one by the 72nd Brigade, covered on the right by a number of men of the 63rd Brigade, and supported by two battalions of the 71st. There remained in reserve the two Yorkshire L.I. battalions of the 64th Brigade, north of Loos.

IV. CORPS : 1ST DIVISION FAILURE TO CAPTURE HULLUCH

The attacking battalions of the 21st and 24th Divisions **Sketch** were to get little assistance on the left, and had to advance ^{32.} past Hulluch with that important flank position still secure in German hands. The 1st Division had suffered very heavily during the previous day's operations, and its three brigades, including Green's Force, had already been reported as "not fit for much more". Its attack was to

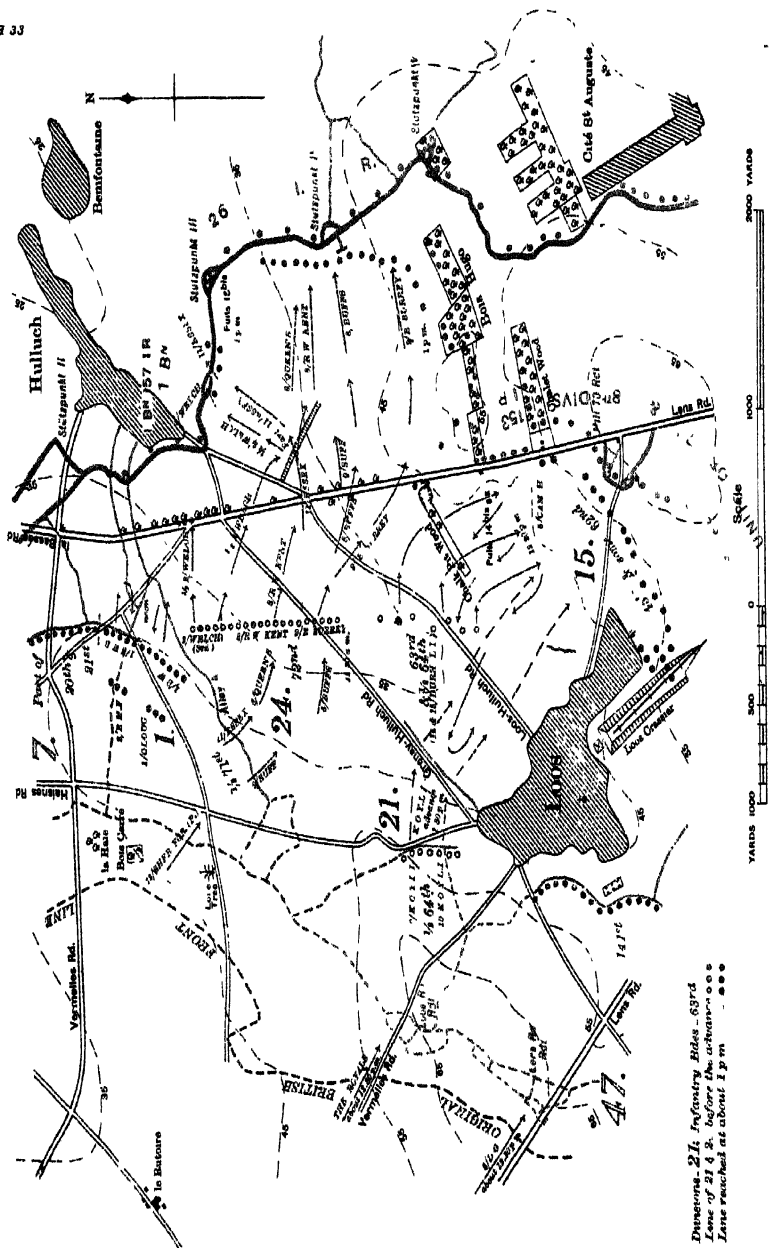
26 Sept. be led by the 3rd Brigade, supported by the 1st Brigade and Green's Force, the whole directed by Br.-General Davies, commanding the 3rd Brigade. It was to be assisted by the 1st Division artillery, of which the XXXIX. Brigade R.F.A., under Lieut.-Colonel E. B. Macnaghten, had advanced during the night to a forward line west of Bois Carré, immediately behind the British original trenches. During the morning what remained of the 3rd and 1st Brigades had been gradually organized for the attack, the 2/Welch (about four hundred strong) on the right in Alley 4 in touch with the 72nd Brigade, and the 1/Black Watch and 1/South Wales Borderers, equally weak, slightly to the left rear of the Welch, in Gun Trench. The 1/Gloucestershire and 2/Munster Fusiliers were behind the right and left, respectively. The remainder of the 1st Division, worn out with fighting, was in reserve about the German original trenches east of Bois Carré. Here again what was ordered as an attack by a division dwindled down to the advance of three battalions, and those weak ones.

About 10.30 A.M. the 2/Welch reported to Br.-General Davies by telephone that the Germans were counter-attacking past the south of Hulluch—no doubt referring to the movement from *Stützpunkt IV.*, which was stopped earlier by fire.¹ The battalion was told to advance at 11 A.M. as ordered, and then communication ceased as a shell fell on the Welch telephone apparatus. Soon afterwards the 1/Black Watch also reported the enemy counter-attack and added, incorrectly, that the Welch were not advancing. This meant that the latter could not possibly cross the Lens road at 11 A.M., as ordered, and it seemed likely that they and the 24th Division were awaiting the enemy counter-attack. The Black Watch and South Wales Borderers were therefore told to stand fast for the moment and advance when the Welch went forward. On this information and the action taken on it being telephoned by Br.-General Davies to the 1st Division, a misunderstanding arose. The G.O.C. 3rd Brigade meant to report that his attack was temporarily postponed until the 2/Welch moved forward, but the 1st Division staff understood him to say that it had been definitely postponed, and Major-General Holland therefore fixed a new hour, 12 noon, for it to be launched. He sent a message accordingly to Br.-General Mitford:—"Brigadier 3rd Brigade reports

¹ See page 319.

LOOS

ATTACK OF 21ST 24TH & 1ST DIVISIONS 13:00 AM - 2 PM 26TH SEPTEMBER 1915



Division. 21. Infantry Bde. - 63rd
Line of 21 & 24. before the attack - - - -
Line reached at about 1 pm - - - -

" that as there was no sign of advance of 24th Division on his 26 Sept. " right he postponed his attack at 11 A.M. I have brought " back my guns from their first lift and have turned them " on again to Hulluch till noon, at which hour precisely I " have ordered attack to be launched without fail. Report " also received from 7th Division that his attack on Cité " St. Elie has been delayed." Br.-General Mitford, however, did not receive this message till 12.10 P.M. and in the meantime his brigade had gone forward to and beyond the Lens road, taking with it the 2/Welch, the right battalion of the 1st Division, which, owing to the destruction of the telephone, had not received the divisional order postponing the attack.

The Welch had left their trenches exactly at 11 A.M., Sketch with and in touch of the 72nd Brigade, two companies ^{33.} leading. They immediately came under heavy rifle, machine-gun and shell fire, losing nearly a hundred men, a quarter of their strength, before they reached the Lens—La Bassée road. From this point the lines of the 72nd Brigade were clearly visible on the right, and in front the Germans who had advanced down to the road earlier in the morning, got up, and ran back as hard as they could, throwing away their arms and finally disappearing through the barbed wire into their trenches. To their surprise, however, the Welch could see nobody moving on their left, and the two leading companies were brought to a halt facing Hulluch unable to proceed. The other two followed the 72nd Brigade, and hopes still ran high.

The divisional order postponing the attack had reached the Black Watch and South Wales Borderers so that it was not until 12 noon, an hour later, that the assault of the two battalions on the western side of Hulluch took place. They had to cross six hundred yards of open ground, fully exposed to the Germans in position, and heavy fire, particularly from six machine guns in the upper stories of some houses in the village, was promptly opened on them. Before the small force had gone a hundred yards half of it had been either killed or wounded, and, as there seemed no chance of reaching the village, the attack was broken off. The reserves were not called on, as there was no reason to suppose that they would be any more successful than the Black Watch and the Borderers. So the disunited and partial attack of the 1st Division on Hulluch produced no result.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

26TH SEPTEMBER (*concluded*)

THE FAILURE OF THE ATTACK AGAINST THE GERMAN SECOND POSITION AND THE FORMATION OF A NEW LINE

(Map 1 ; Sketches A, 18, 33, 34, 35, 36)

THE ATTACK AND RETIREMENT OF THE 21ST DIVISION

Sketch The situation of the XI. Corps about noon was as follows.
33. On the right of the attack, although portions of the 15th Division, supported by the 62nd Brigade of the 21st Division, were still holding a front below the crest-line of Hill 70 from Loos Crassier to Chalet Wood, the summit of the hill and its redoubt were still in possession of the enemy, as also was Bois Hugo. On the left, the assault of the 1st Division on Hulluch had not yet taken place, but when the partial effort was made shortly after 12 noon it failed ; the long flank from Puits 13 bis (*Stützpunkt III.*) to Hulluch was also in the enemy's hands. Thus the essential conditions of a successful advance against the enemy second position between Bois Hugo and Puits 13 bis were lacking. Nevertheless, a number of battalions of the 21st and 24th Divisions were now moving across the Lens—La Bassée road into the pocket between the two uncaptured German flanks.¹ Furthermore, not only had the Germans greatly strengthened their position in Bois Hugo and on Hill 70 during the morning, but they were now in possession of Chalet Wood. The 6/Camerons had made repeated efforts to recapture the western end of the wood, and

¹ The leading line of the 8/Royal West Kent is reported to have reached the Lens—La Bassée road at 11.15 A.M., that of the 9/East Surrey a few minutes later.

desperate hand-to-hand fighting took place.¹ Finally, 26 Sept. only some fifty of the Camerons remained, and these the battalion commander, Lieut.-Colonel A. F. Douglas-Hamilton, rallied once more to check the German advance through the thick undergrowth. But the odds against them were too heavy, the party was annihilated, Lieut.-Colonel Douglas-Hamilton killed and the wood finally lost.²

Before many men of the 21st and 24th Divisions had passed the Lens—La Bassée road, the German force now established in Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo took most effective action. As the men of the 68rd Brigade and the 14/Durham L.I. of the 64th, reorganized hurriedly into successive lines, moved up the slope they were assailed by heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from the edge of the two copses. In the noise of battle it is difficult to judge the position of the enemy, except by sight, and the Germans, hidden in the thick undergrowth at the edge of the copses, were invisible. South of Chalet Wood, however, on the ground rising up to Hill 70 could be seen a number of men in position. It was believed that all the British troops had retired from these trenches; and those still in them, the remnants of the 45th, 46th and part of the 62nd Brigades, wearing long greatcoats and gas-helmets, were mistaken for Germans. The sight of these supposed enemies attracted and misled the attackers; for, instead of moving due east on Bois Hugo, they gradually changed direction south-eastwards up the northern slopes of Hill 70, across the face of Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo, in which lurked their real danger.³ At first the men pressed on in the new direction in spite of heavy enemy fire from the woods that enfiladed them at close range; but at 12.20 P.M., when within a few hundred yards of the supposed enemy, the lines wavered, and were presently forced to retreat down the slope back into the Loos valley. They crossed the Loos—Hulluch road, moving towards the Grenay—Hulluch road, along which the 9/ and 10/K.O.Y.L.I., the two units of the 64th Brigade still unengaged, had been in position, under intermittent shell fire, throughout the morning. The commanders of these two battalions of the K.O.Y.L.I. (Lieut.-

¹ In this detachments of the 106th Reserve, 153rd and 178th Regiments took part. There is an account of the fighting in "Regt. No. 178", pp.151-4.

² Lieut.-Colonel Douglas-Hamilton was posthumously awarded the V.C. for bravery, untiring energy and splendid leadership.

³ This is the explanation given at the time. Possibly the alignment of the Grenay—Hulluch and Loos—Hulluch roads athwart the direction of the attack also had its influence, for the general movement was eventually at right angles to them towards Hill 70.

26 Sept. Colonels C. W. D. Lynch and A. W. A. Pollock) were at this crisis at 64th Brigade headquarters, where they had been summoned to receive orders. Br.-General Gloster was averse to throwing in the battalions, and had arrived at the conclusion that it was best to consolidate the position that he occupied and await fresh troops. Two battalions could not be expected to do much, even if the survivors of the retirement turned about and joined in their advance; but a divisional staff officer, who had been at the front, now arrived and counselled attack. Before orders for this could be given, the matter was taken out of the brigadier's hands. As the retreating troops approached the road, the front line of the 9/K.O.Y.L.I., urged by the staff officer, who suddenly appeared, rose and advanced. When they were plainly beyond recall, Br.-General Gloster instructed Lieut.-Colonel Pollock to support them with the 10/K.O.Y.L.I. Contrary to his expectation the bulk of the retreating units rallied around and in the ranks of the two Yorkshire battalions and went forward again. He, however, at once sent verbal instructions by messenger to the two commanding officers, not to advance beyond the Loos—Hulluch road, and to occupy the trenches there; for less than ever did there seem any prospect of two battalions succeeding where so many had failed. He hoped, however, that even a short advance might restore the situation.

Unfortunately these orders did not become effective: the 9/K.O.Y.L.I. did not receive them, and in the general confusion the two commanding officers were unable to pass their own instructions to all their companies, still less gain control of the men who were rallying—in fact, only two companies of the 10/K.O.Y.L.I. received the order correctly and acted on it. Led by individual company and platoon officers, and without much cohesion, a force of the 68rd and 64th Brigades advanced once more across the Loos—Hulluch road and up the northern slope of Hill 70, taking again as the objective the line of men, still believed to be Germans, that could be seen below the crest of the hill. Once more it came under the heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from Chalet Wood and Bois Hugo that swept it in enfilade, inflicting severe casualties.¹ Before the lines of

¹ The account of this attack from the German side is of interest: "Near 12 noon [British time] masses of infantry, estimated at about a division, began to advance in about twenty waves on a front between Loos and Chalk Pit Wood (Rebhuhnwäldchen), moving in a southerly direction towards Hill 70. Simultaneously those British troops entrenched opposite Hill 70 Redoubt opened a heavy covering fire. The

men again reached the Lens—La Bassée road they had passed the limit of endurance, and shortly afterwards, although some held on, most of them following the example set by a few fell back by parties in an orderly manner across the Loos—Hulluch road to the Grenay—Hulluch road position. A number, including such K.O.Y.L.I. men as had retired, were rallied here by the 64th Brigade staff and the two reserve companies of the 9/ and 10/K.O.Y.L.I., and faced about ; but the majority continued to retire up the western slope of the Loos valley towards the original front defences. 26 Sept.

THE ATTACK AND RETIREMENT OF THE 24TH DIVISION

Neither the loss of direction and subsequent retreat of the 63rd and 64th Brigades of the 21st Division, nor the patent failure of the 1st Division to capture Hulluch, affected the steady advance of the 72nd Brigade and the two battalions of the 71st Brigade of the 24th Division. Though they immediately came under machine-gun, shell and rifle fire, they continued to move steadily up the gentle, open slope. But, before reaching the Lens—La Bassée road, the 9/East Surrey, the right of the 72nd Brigade, in its efforts to keep touch as ordered with the 21st Division, had been drawn away to its right, and it crossed the road immediately north of the Chalk Pit. Thence it moved along the northern face of Bois Hugo, coming under terrific enfilade fire from the wood, and passed into the area of the 21st Division. The 8/Royal West Kent, the left leading battalion, on the other hand, with the half-battalion of the 2/Welch, continued to advance eastwards, straight for its objective, across the junction of the Grenay—Hulluch and Lens—La Bassée roads and past the southern front of Hulluch. The survivors of the German counter-attack from *Stützpunkt IV*, earlier in the morning, fled in disorder before it 33.

“advancing masses were nevertheless taken under fire by the machine guns and rifles in the Hill 70 Redoubt and effectively enfiladed by those of the 153rd Regiment and a company of the 106th Reserve Regiment which had advanced during the morning through the woods east of Puits 14 bis and occupied the line of the Lens—La Bassée road, between Hill 70 and Puits 14 bis. The effect of this fire from two sides was very considerable, whole lines being mown down by the machine guns. The enemy fled back in confusion towards Loos. Later he attacked again in a similar manner against Hill 70 and against the 153rd Regiment in position along the Lens—La Bassée road. He was easily and completely repulsed, his advance being again taken under concentric fire from Hill 70 Redoubt and from the Lens road.” (“Res. Regt. No. 106”, pp. 39-41.)

26 Sept. back to the second position, leaving some two hundred dead behind them. Directly the R. West Kent and the Welch crossed the Lens—La Bassée road they came under enfilade fire from both flanks. After pushing on another four hundred yards, they reported receiving very heavy frontal fire also.

Thus on a frontage of fifteen hundred yards between Bois Hugo and Puits 13 bis which had been allotted to two divisions, two and a half battalions were attacking with a gap of nearly seven hundred yards in their line. This gap the 8/Buffs, the right support battalion of the 72nd Brigade, was sent forward by Br.-General Mitford to fill, and, as the R. West Kent and Welch were losing heavily from machine-gun fire from the flanking trench south of Hulluch, the 8/Queen's was also pushed up to fill gaps and prolong the line to the left. A little later the 11/Essex was sent forward to support the R. West Kent and the Welch, whilst the 9/Suffolk was moved behind the centre of the attack. These reinforcements gave the attack of the R. West Kent and the Welch a fresh impulse. The bulk of the East Surreys, too, whose right was hanging back facing the fire from Bois Hugo, also felt the effect and joined in the forward movement of the troops on their left.

The full weight of the machine guns and rifles in Hulluch, in the second position trenches, and in Bois Hugo, was now concentrated against the two Kent and the two Surrey battalions and the Welch with them, which were pressing on, thinned every few yards by casualties, into the big pocket between the two flanks of the German defence, their centre and left in excellent line, their right thrown back. To add to their discomfiture, the enemy brought up two half-batteries of field guns into a concealed position in Hulluch, and opened fire at point-blank range with shrapnel and occasional gas shell, enfilading the whole length of the advancing lines.¹

The morning haze had now dispersed, and the light was good, so that, as the men of the 72nd Brigade reached the top of the rise and had three hundred yards of gentle descent before them, they could see ahead a formidable

¹ The battalion diaries are unanimous in accusing the British artillery of firing into their infantry when they got up near the German wire. They say the ranging on the German second line was not accurate, and the mass of the shell of the 21st and 24th Division artillery fell short, causing considerable loss and discouragement in the British ranks. As the battery commanders did not know the ground, and the situation of the infantry was at times very obscure, the shooting was no doubt erratic.

barbed-wire entanglement, and beyond it the German 26 Sept. defenders firing with heads and shoulders exposed above the parapet of the second position. Assailed in front and from both flanks by the enemy, the losses of the attacking battalions were very heavy, and their situation became well-nigh impossible. But this did not stop them, and they continued straight on, never wavering, in short rushes, the long, rank grass being the only available cover on this barren space. Eventually by about 1 P.M., the leading lines were within fifty yards of the German second position. In spite of casualties, gallant efforts were made to force a way forward. A thin line of survivors crawled up to the entanglement, but it had not been damaged by the short bombardment, no gaps could be seen, and all attempts to cut the wire failed with heavy loss.

On the left the rear half-battalion of the Welch had moved against the part of the German flank between Puits 13 bis and Hulluch.¹ The men managed to get through the wire and entered the enemy trench, which was practically unoccupied: the few Germans seen were unarmed and wished to surrender.² At last there was a gleam of hope in this quarter, but there were no troops of the 1st Division near to exploit the success.

The 9/Suffolk and 11/Essex of the 71st Brigade, having been ordered forward at 11.25 A.M., were now advancing across the Lens—La Bassée road to reinforce the 72nd Brigade. They also immediately came under very heavy fire from Hulluch and its vicinity, and about a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards beyond the road the lines of the Suffolk were brought to a stop. Part of the Essex on the left turned towards Hulluch and made a gallant effort to reach the enemy and check his fire, eventually finding refuge in a hollow road south-west of the village. The remainder of the Essex, regardless of fire, moved straight ahead in the general direction of *Stützpunkt IV.*, and some of them reached the wire entanglement and mingled with the Queen's.³ A deadlock had now been

¹ Apparently to the point marked by a loop on Sketch 33.

² They were a party of twenty or thirty sent out to dig as a punishment. Having put their coats, rifles and stick-grenades in a heap, they were caught unawares.

³ "Regt. No. 26" states: "The battalion staff was on the left flank, south of *Stützpunkt IV.*, whence we had a wonderful view. The English attacked in whole hosts and with great dash. Our men fired standing up as fast as they could pull the triggers. No Englishman got through the wire entanglement, and the ground in front was covered with bodies."

26 Sept. reached. By a disciplined effort the 8/R. West Kent, 8/Buffs, 8/Queen's and 11/Essex, suffering severe casualties but pushing on without firing a shot, had arrived at the wire in front of their objective, the German second position. In the long grass near it they were hidden from the fire that had caused their losses. The Germans were now invisible and only fired at men who tried to break down the wire or otherwise made themselves conspicuous. The chances of getting through the wire into the trench were hopeless. On the right the survivors could see the 21st Division and 9/East Surrey slowly falling back; on their left rear Hulluch was still in possession of the enemy. There were no signs of reserves coming up. Some officers were for sticking it out, unwilling to give up ground gained; others felt that if they remained, they could not escape being taken prisoner, and that they had done all that could be reasonably expected.¹ Lieut.-Colonels Romer of the Buffs,² Fairtlough of the Queen's, Radclyffe of the Essex were killed; Vansittart of the R. West Kent and Brettell of the Suffolk, wounded; and many other officers had fallen. Somebody cried "Retire!", and, leaving the 8/Buffs and others, who remained and were killed or captured, most of the survivors, some ten to fifteen minutes after the retirement of the 21st Division had been observed, by common accord began to fall back steadily, without panic and at an even pace, towards the Lens road. Half-way up the slope, that is about seven hundred yards from the road, the flank nearest Hulluch was mown down by machine-gun fire, and then the line broke up into groups, some men making for the hollow road south-west of Hulluch. Here they were collected, and passed on to the trench Alley 4, from which the leading lines of the 72nd Brigade had attacked such a short time before. Of the 24th Division there was no force left in hand except the Pioneer battalion, the 12/Sherwood Foresters, which was sent up to Lone Tree ridge, and did good service in stemming the tide of stragglers and organizing scattered parties.

The 2/Welch, with two companies in the German flanking trench east of Hulluch and two opposite the west of the

Sketch
34.

¹ Major-General J. E. Capper, who succeeded Major-General Sir J. G. Ramsay in command of the 24th Division shortly after the battle, wrote in his report on these operations of the 26th September:—"The division had undertaken a task under conditions in which the best-trained troops in the British or any other army would have found it difficult to succeed."

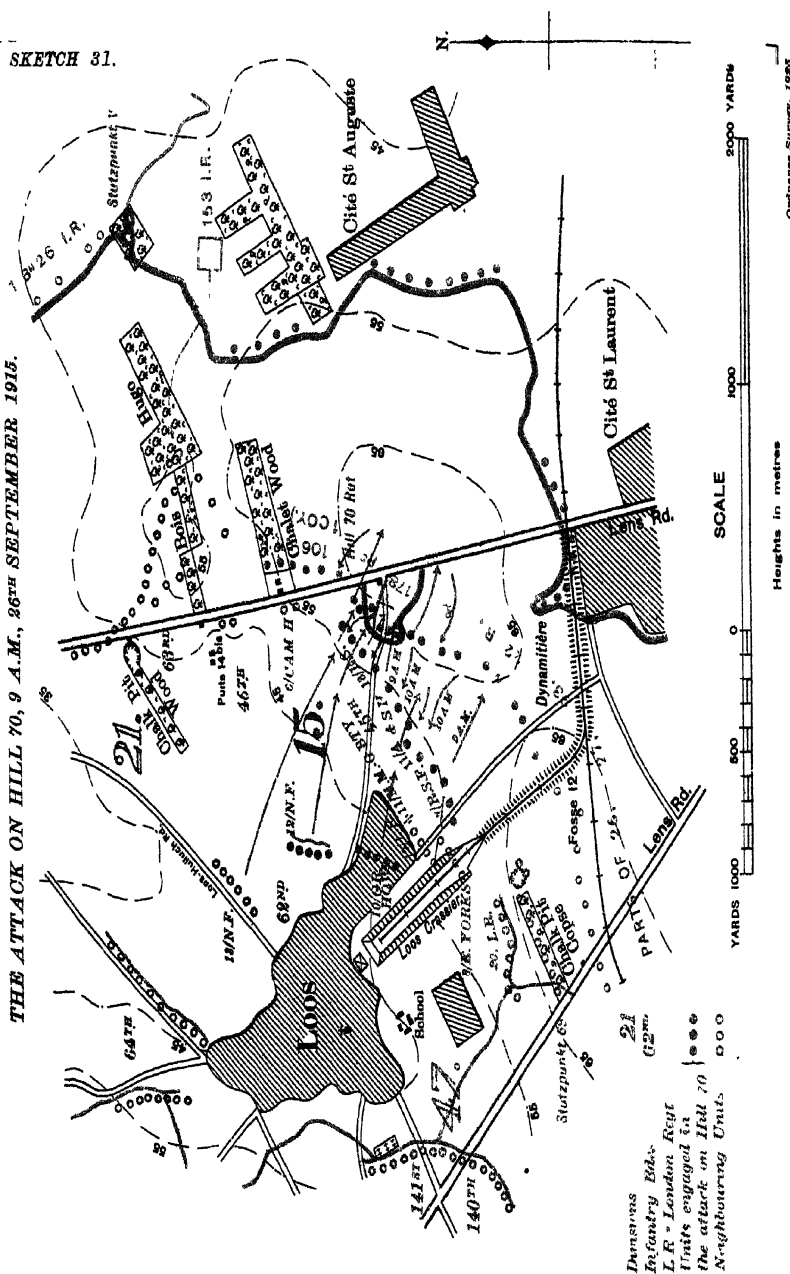
Until Hulluch should be taken, there was little chance of success.

² Colonel F. C. Romer, a Militia officer, was 61 years of age when he fell, and with him died 12 officers and 165 other ranks of the Buffs.

SKETCH 31

THE ATTACK ON HILL 70, 9 A.M., 26TH SEPTEMBER 1915.

SKETCH 31.



village, saw the general retirement and, finding both their flanks in the air, also withdrew. They were reorganized in the trench from which they had started, on the left of the 72nd Brigade, after losing so heavily in the retirement that the battalion was reduced to 7 officers and 180 other ranks. 26 Sept.

THE GENERAL RETIREMENT FROM THE LENS ROAD AND THE RALLY ON LONE TREE RIDGE

The moment of the retirement of the battalions of the 24th Division practically coincided with that of the 63rd and 64th Brigades of the 21st Division from opposite Chalet Wood, so that towards 1.30 p.m. a mass of troops was falling back on the entire front between the Vermelles—Loos and the Vermelles—Hulluch roads. A thin line of brave men, however, continued to hold their ground, and thereby, without special intention, covered the retirement of the rest. On the right, the survivors of the 45th and 46th Brigades were still in position on the northern slope of Hill 70. Opposite Bois Hugo the survivors of the two companies of the 8/Somerset, under Major L. C. Howard, still held their position in the Chalk Pit, whilst near them in the shelter-pits and trenches immediately north of the wood a number of the 12/West Yorkshire and 8/Lincolnshire, and at least one company of the 10/York and Lancaster, had, in spite of enfilade fire, held fast through all the changing fortunes of the battle. In front of the German second position between Bois Hugo and Hulluch, isolated groups of officers and men of the 24th Division—about five hundred in all—who had not joined in the retirement continued to hold on in the hope that reinforcements would eventually arrive.¹

Behind this screen of scattered parties which, lying in the long grass, could not be seen from the British lines, the retirement was carried out unmolested. The men came back at a walk, but without order or formation. The various fragments of the battalions of the 72nd Brigade, and of the 11/Essex and 9/Suffolks (71st), and 2/Welch (3rd), collected and reorganized by Br.-General Mitford in Alley 4 continued in position, supported by the 12/Sherwood

¹ Sergeant A. F. Saunders, 9/Suffolk, was awarded the V.C. for his conspicuously gallant conduct. When his officer had been wounded, he took charge of two machine guns and a few men, and, although severely wounded himself, "continued to give clear orders and by continuous firing did his best to cover the retirement".

26 Sept. Foresters, which he had ordered up; but the remainder re-crossed the great open space of the Loos valley, and then moved up the slope to Lone Tree ridge.

The Germans did not follow in pursuit, but from Hulluch about 2 p.m. they sent out medical personnel and stretcher bearers, who, regardless of shelling, worked at binding up the British wounded, sending all who could walk or crawl back to the British lines.

The two companies of the 8/Somerset L.I. in the Chalk Pit now being isolated, with no troops on either flank, the 63rd Brigade sent them orders to retire, and they made their way back to the old German front trenches.

Sketch
34.

At first the news that the 21st and 24th Divisions had broken was not credited at XI. Corps headquarters in Noeux les Mines. At 4.15 p.m. a written report, from a General Staff officer of the 24th Division who had been sent forward at the request of General Haking to ascertain what the situation was, swept away the last gleam of hope. It was to the effect that on reaching Lone Tree he had met hundreds of men coming back, and it was obvious that cohesion had been lost. General Haig, who happened at the moment to be with General Haking, at first thought that the message must have been sent by an alarmist; but further reports following in quick succession proved that it was only too true. General Haig thereupon decided to employ the Guards Division, which was already moving forward from Noeux les Mines and Houchin, to restore the situation, and, after application to Sir John French, it was definitely placed at his disposal for this purpose. At his request, General Haking went forward to both 21st and 24th Divisional headquarters, at Philosophe and Vermelles, to give the necessary orders for the German original trench line between the B  thune—Lens and the Vermelles—Hulluch roads to be held at all costs. He was also to give the information that the Guards Division was being sent forward and would relieve both divisions in that line during the evening.

Staff officers were sent out by the divisions to assist in re-forming the troops and to organize the holding of the line of Lone Tree ridge. Hither the 104th Field Company R.E. of the 24th Division, followed later by the 129th, was sent to work on the defences; whilst the 98th and 126th Field Companies of the 21st Division were ordered forward as infantry to the old British trenches astride the Vermelles—Loos road. The staff officers found considerable parties

of men crossing the old German and British trenches and moving back towards Mazingarbe, Le Rutoire and Vermelles. One officer sent back word that the units had apparently lost their officers and most of their N.C.O.'s, and were hungry, thirsty and tired out. In most cases, however, when called upon—being, as one officer said "sheep without a shepherd"—they halted and were ready to re-form in the German trenches. One strong party, with only a few junior officers, arrived in front of Le Rutoire, where they said they had been directed to concentrate. On being told by a brigadier of the 1st Division that they would be more useful in the original German front line, they all turned about and went as ordered. "They seemed rather done in, but steady." General Haking found that all the men to whom he spoke gave much the same reply:—"We did not understand what it was like; we will do all right next time". The bulk of the survivors of the 63rd and 64th Brigades stopped at the line of the original German front trenches, where they were disposed under the personal supervision of Major-General Forestier-Walker, who had come out to the 64th Brigade headquarters at Point 69, about a thousand yards south of Lone Tree.

In the course therefore of an hour the retirement of the four infantry brigades of the 21st and 24th was brought to an end.¹

15TH DIVISION: THE PARTIAL EVACUATION OF THE HILL 70 TRENCHES AND THEIR RE-OCCUPATION

Whilst the retirement was in progress, a withdrawal was made by order from the position held below the summit of Hill 70. The message which brought this about cannot now be discovered, nor can its origin be definitely cleared up. About 3 P.M. an order was sent by the 15th Division, addressed to its three brigades and seen by the G.O.C. 62nd Brigade, that all stragglers should be collected to hold the old German front line under orders of the G.O.C. 45th Brigade. Possibly this may have been telephoned or sent to Loos for delivery to the headquarters of the 45th. What is certain is that, about 3 P.M., a message, not preserved, said to have been brought by a man of the 15th Divisional Signal Company from Loos was handed to an officer in the thinly held line of the 45th and 46th Brigades

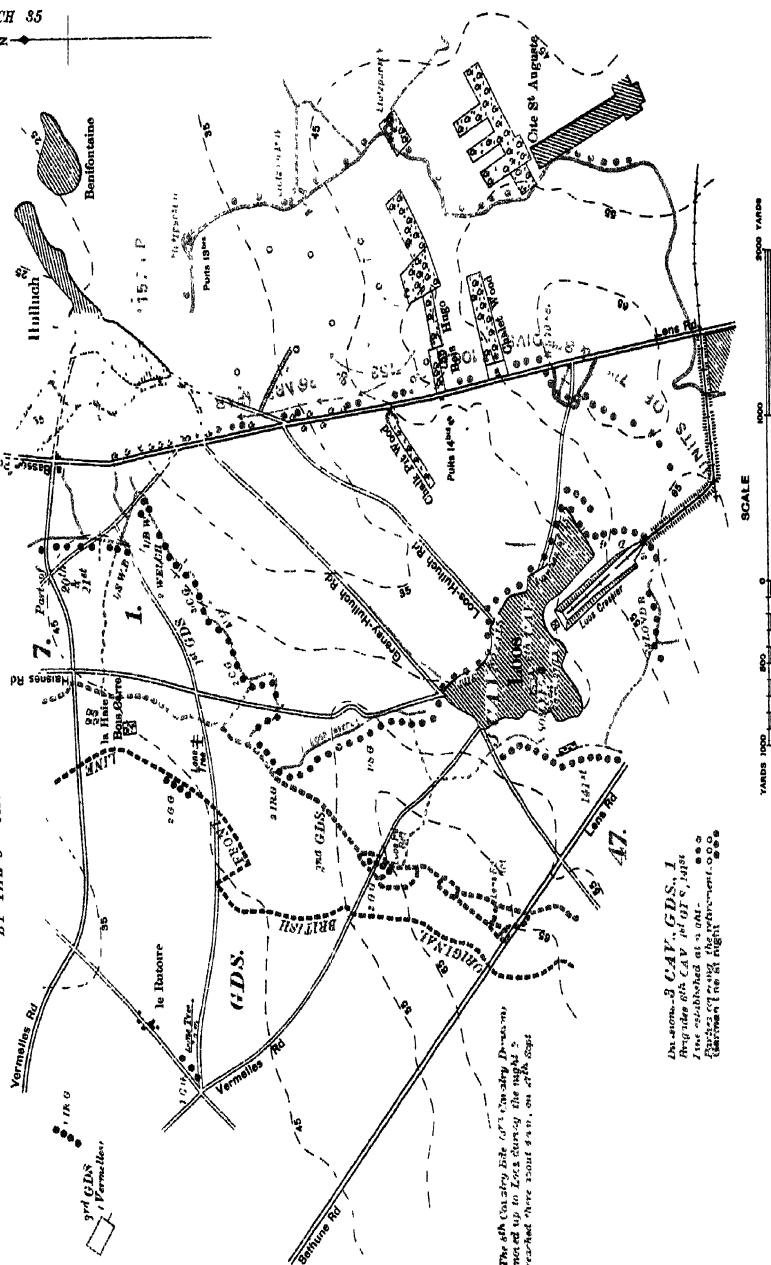
¹ For the losses of the 21st and 24th Divisions, see page 342.

26 Sept. still on the western slopes of Hill 70. It was to the effect that the line of the old German trenches between Vermelles—Hulluch and Béthune—Lens roads was to be held. The retirement of lines of men of the 21st and 24th Divisions could be seen to the north; but Lieut.-Colonel McNeill, commanding the 11/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, to whom the message, its signature torn off, was handed, declined to take any action on it. He forwarded it and a summary of its contents by two different runners to Lieut.-Colonel Maclear, commanding the 13/Royal Scots, whom he believed to be the senior officer in the firing line. Colonel Maclear was not on the hill at the time, and the messages were taken to Lieut.-Colonel Henning, commanding the 7/Royal Scots Fusiliers. The first message he ignored, as there seemed to be no necessity for a withdrawal; but on the arrival of the summary shortly afterwards, he regarded it as confirmatory of the first, instead of as a duplicate, and, though still seeing no reason to retire, he felt that the order must be connected with some more comprehensive operation which he was not in a position to understand. He was finally confirmed in this view by the return of a messenger, whom he had sent to brigade headquarters to report his position and to ask for rations and ammunition, as the man brought back the envelope unopened and marked "gone back to Vermelles". He therefore gave verbal orders for a withdrawal from Hill 70, and they were acted on by nearly all the British troops on and near the hill, including parties of various battalions of the 45th and 46th Brigades on the left, south of and facing Chalet Wood. By 3.30 p.m. the general retirement from Hill 70 was in full progress through and beyond Loos village.¹ But a certain number of men remained in the lower and possibly the upper of the two lines of trenches. Directly Br.-General Matheson saw the retirement he sent up three officers and a hundred men whom he had collected when the 21st and 24th Divisions retired, and Major W. W. Macgregor of the 9/Gordons, the Pioneer battalion of the 15th Division, led up two companies which were putting Loos in a state of defence. These reinforcements reached and held the lower trench. A most searching investigation was subsequently made as to the cause of the unnecessary withdrawal from the hill and as to the origin of the message. It led to no

¹ Private R. Dunsire, 13/R. Scots, was awarded the V.C. for the rescue, under heavy fire, of two wounded men from between the two firing lines.

LOOS

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LINE, SOUTH OF THE HULLUCH ROAD,
BY THE 3RD CAVALRY AND GUARDS DIVISIONS, 20TH SEPT



definite result except the exoneration from blame of the 26 Sept. several officers on the hill who were concerned.

On the right of the hill the units astride and near the Loos Crassier held on. Major H. Phillips, of the 1/19th London, the senior officer left, communicated to Lieut.-Colonel Hubback, 1/20th London, further west, that an order had been passed down from the line of the 15th Division for a general retirement, but he could not say from whom it emanated. The information was passed to Br.-General Thwaites (141st Brigade), who, having just been told by the 47th Division that two regiments of the 6th Cavalry Brigade were coming up as reinforcements, immediately gave orders that all positions gained were to be held at all costs.

Fortunately the Germans on and near Hill 70 seem to have misunderstood the situation. Possibly they may have mistaken for reliefs the parties of men sent by Br.-General Matheson and Major MacGregor; for they launched a counter-attack not against the hill trenches, but against the Loos Crassier and the Chalk Pit south of Loos. The troops on or east of the Crassier retired to its western side, but the attack was repulsed with great decision, mainly owing to the spirited defence of A Company of the 1/20th London with two machine guns in the Chalk Pit.

The situation on Hill 70 during the latter part of the morning had already led to the demand by General Rawlinson for reinforcements "in the event of any serious developments". The only formed body of troops at General Haig's disposal at that time in the immediate neighbourhood was the 3rd Cavalry Division. Major-General Butler, his Chief General Staff officer, at 12 noon had therefore telephoned to Major-General C. J. Briggs, to place a cavalry brigade at the disposal of the IV. Corps. The latter selected the 6th Cavalry Brigade (Br.-General D. G. M. Campbell), less the North Somerset Yeomanry. The 3rd Dragoon Guards (Lieut.-Colonel O. B. B. Smith-Bingham) and 1st Royal Dragoons (Lieut.-Colonel H. D. McNeile) left their horses near the Corons de Rutoire as a good deal of shelling was taking place and went forward on foot to the original British trenches, between the Loos Road Redoubt and the Lens Road Redoubt, and thence to the old German first line trench. Here they had assisted in rallying parties of men, mostly of the 62nd Brigade, who were coming back continuously from Hill 70 through Loos.

At 3.30 P.M., on receiving the report that the position

26 Sept. on Hill 70 had been vacated, General Rawlinson at once directed Br.-General Campbell, as Br.-General Thwaites had heard, to go forward with the two regiments to Loos and hold the village at all costs, a hazardous task as it then seemed. This advance was carried out by the 3rd Dragoon Guards and 1st Royal Dragoons, the Pylon Towers being given as the point of direction for their inner flanks. Before reaching the western exits of Loos, they met the main portion of the 45th and 46th Brigades, some four hundred men, retiring from Hill 70. On being told that they were mistaken and that there had been no orders to retire, these men at once turned; and, though exhausted after thirty-six hours of incessant fighting and digging, and witnesses of the retirement of the 21st and 24th Divisions, which might have shaken far more experienced troops, they advanced again through the village to the lower line of trenches on Hill 70 which they had left. This they reached about 8 P.M., finding the men who had remained and those who had reinforced them, in possession. The line was now organized, with the 3rd Dragoon Guards, who re-occupied the Crassier, on the right; the parties of the 15th Division in the centre; and the Royal Dragoons on the left. Above them, just below the crest-line of the hill, could be seen a line of yellow flags, marking the front line of trenches that had been abandoned. This was believed to be still occupied by small parties acting as a covering force, but later it was discovered that the flags were all that remained of the original occupiers of the position. The Germans in the redoubt and immediately behind the crest of the hill showed no activity, nor did they hinder in any way the reinforcement of the hill and the strengthening during the night of the new British line around the eastern edge of Loos village.

Sketch
35.

In the meantime the retirement of the parties from opposite Chalet Wood and from the Chalk Pit near it had enabled the Germans as it grew dusk to come out at their leisure from the shelter of Bois Hugo. Making no effort to pursue, they contented themselves with moving northwards along the Lens—La Bassée road and cutting off the retreat of those men of the 24th Division, and of the West Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, who were still east of the Lens road between Bois Hugo and Hulluch. Attacked from front and rear, the survivors, eighteen officers—among them Colonels Prothero of the 2/Welch and Vansittart (wounded) of the Royal West Kent—and five hundred

men, including many of the 8/Buffs, were surrounded and captured. The Germans (units of the *157th Regiment* from Hulluch, of the *26th Regiment* from *Stützpunkt IV.* and of the *153rd Regiment* from Bois Hugo) subsequently moved forward to a position approximately along the Lens road between Bois Hugo and Hulluch, which they entrenched during the night.¹ 26 Sept.

To conclude the account of the operations in this sector, at 11.30 P.M. Major-General Briggs was ordered by General Haig personally to proceed to Loos with the remainder of the 3rd Cavalry Division and take over command there, with instructions that his force was on no account to abandon the village. The arrival of the division in Loos at 2.45 A.M. enabled a complete relief of the 15th Division to be carried out, the survivors being collected at Mazin-garbe. Out of an approximate brigade strength of 3,800 all ranks, the 44th Brigade had lost in the two days' fighting 69 officers and 2,387 other ranks; the 45th Brigade, 63 officers and 1,430 other ranks; and the 46th Brigade, 72 officers and 2,220 other ranks.

After taking over, the 3rd Cavalry Division set about collecting the dead and evacuating the wounded. Some guns abandoned by the 15th Division, together with German guns, were found and sent to the rear. Many German prisoners too were rounded up; in one of the Pylons was discovered an elaborate telephone installation with a German operator still at work.

GUARDS DIVISION: THE ADVANCE TO LONE TREE RIDGE AND THE RELIEF OF THE 21ST AND 24TH DIVISIONS

Whilst affairs near Loos were thus being cleared up, the Guards Division (Major-General the Earl of Cavan), ordered in the first place by the XI. Corps² to move forward in readiness to support the attack of the 21st and 24th Divisions, was making good a new front north of the village and along Lone Tree ridge. *Sketch* 35.

The march up of the division on the 25th had been carried out under conditions similar to those which the

¹ According to "Regt. No. 26", ii. p. 304, during the following nights the British wounded were brought back and attended to. Although some lay as long as five days out in the long grass before they were found, they were all amazingly cheerful, especially when given a cigarette: one English major even asked for a glass of beer whilst his wound was being dressed.

² See page 315.

26 Sept. 21st and 24th Divisions had experienced. The confusion and congestion of the traffic on the roads had been appalling; all sorts of transport, ambulance wagons, troops, including cavalry, were encountered, endeavouring to go in all sorts of directions, and there were not sufficient staff officers and police to enforce even the arrangements planned.¹ Heavy rain added to the difficulties and discomforts of the march, and, although the brigades of the Guards Division moved off very early, from 5.30 A.M. onwards, it was 8 P.M. before they began to reach their destinations, and midnight and after before they were all in. Even then they found Noeux les Mines and Houchin (1½ miles west of Noeux les Mines) crowded and no billets reserved for them.

Sketch A. On the 26th the 1st Guards Brigade (Br.-General G. P. T. Feilding) marched out of Noeux les Mines at 1 P.M., and thence through Noyelles to Vermelles. The 2nd (Br.-General J. Ponsonby) left Houchin at 2 P.M. and marched by Noeux les Mines and Saily Labourse to the Corons de Rutoire. The 3rd (Br.-General F. J. Heyworth), in rear, marched at 3 P.M. from Haillicourt (4 miles west of Noeux les Mines) to Saily Labourse.

Congested roads again delayed the movement of all three brigades; and as the leading battalions began to approach their destinations, a certain amount of tear-gas shell began to fall, and the taking of precautions caused further loss of time. It was not until 4 P.M. that the Guards Division was placed under General Haig,² and about 6 P.M. and sunset before the 2nd and 1st Guards Brigades reached the Corons de Rutoire and Vermelles, respectively. At first it proved impossible to discover where the headquarters of any formation could be found, or even where the front line was, although advanced parties had been sent on. Meantime, in order to give immediate support to the rallied men of the 21st and 24th Divisions along the line of the old German trenches on Lone Tree ridge, General Haig, at 4.30 P.M., had ordered General Briggs to go forward with the 3rd Cavalry Division (less the two regiments at Loos) and occupy the line until relieved by the Guards Division. The regiments went forward dismounted and found on their arrival about 9 P.M. representatives of the

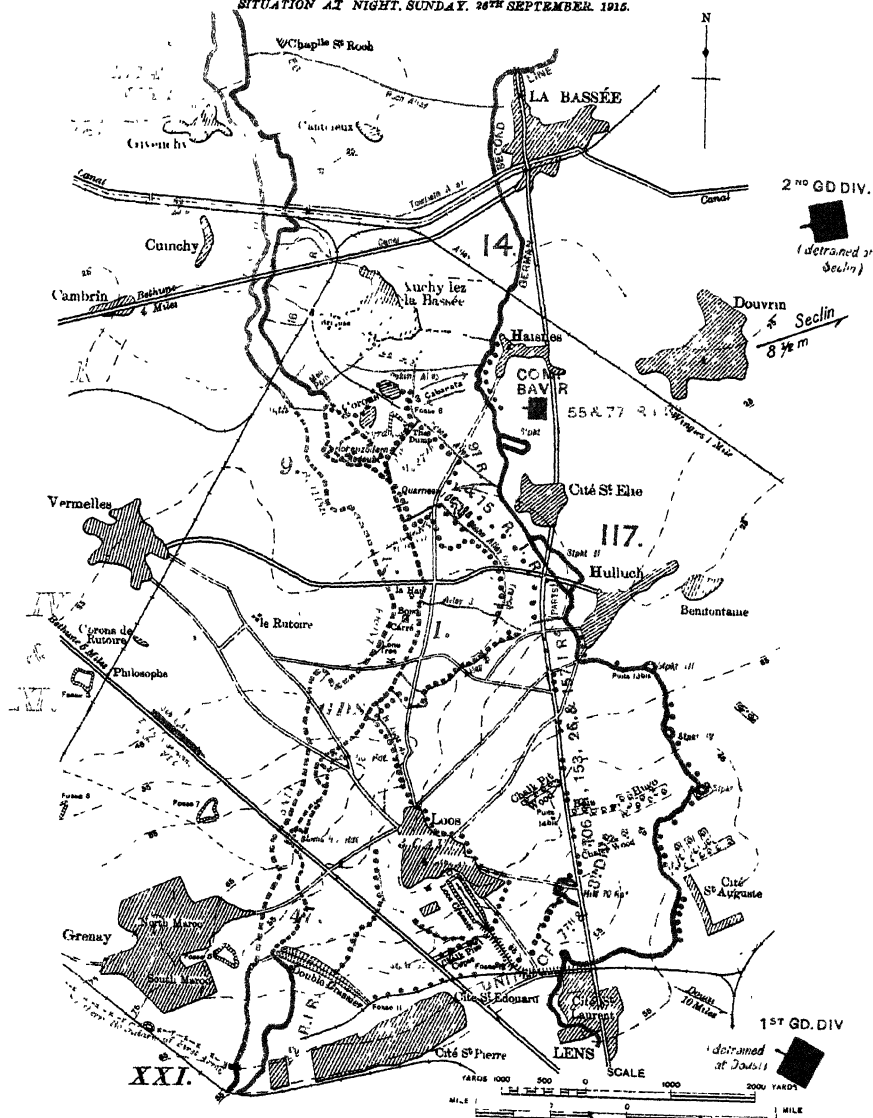
Sketch
35.

¹ See Note II. Chapter XV.

² G.H.Q. message, timed 3 P.M., handed in at 3.30 P.M. and received at Advanced First Army at 4.2 P.M. The statement in Sir John French's despatch of 15th October 1915 that the Guards Division was placed at the disposal of the First Army "on the morning of the 26th" was the subject of a protest from the First Army.

LOOS

SITUATION AT NIGHT, SUNDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER 1916.



Scale 1:100,000 (1 inch = 1 mile)

Scale 1:100,000 (1 inch = 1 mile)

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Scale 1:100,000 (1 inch = 1 mile)

Guards Division arranging to take over the position. They therefore marched back to their horses at the Corons de Rutoire, and, as we have seen, moved to Loos at 11.30 p.m. 26/27 Sept.

The company commanders of the leading battalions of the 2nd and 1st Guards Brigades, who had been sent ahead to see in daylight the line of trenches to be occupied, led their units during the early part of the night to positions in the original British front trenches:—the 2nd Guards Brigade on the right, with its centre about Loos Road Redoubt; the 1st on the left, centre about Lone Tree; the 3rd remained in reserve about the Corons de Rutoire. Soon after midnight the front battalions were taken forward from the British trenches to Alley 4, and at 4 a.m. relieved the portion of the 72nd Brigade and other troops collected there by Br.-General Mitford. The line actually occupied extended from north of Loos village, where connection was made with the left of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, along the North Loos Avenue communication trench, to Northern Sap and thence along the Hulluch communication trench (Alley 4) to a point half-way to the Lens—La Bassée road, where touch was gained with the right of the 1st Division.¹ This division still maintained its forward position in Gun Trench, the 7th Division being on its left.

Behind the new front of the Guards Division the survivors of the 21st and 24th Divisions who had come in were assembled during the night at Noyelles and Sailly Labourse. The casualties of these two divisions had been heavy. Of the 24th Division, the 72nd Brigade, which had borne the brunt of the day's fighting, had lost 75 officers (including three out of four of its commanding officers) and 1,979 other ranks out of its original strength of 3,600, the 8/Buffs and 8/R. West Kent having over five hundred casualties each, and only one unwounded officer left, and the 8/Queen's and 9/East Surrey, just under five hundred. The 71st had lost 40 officers and 741 other ranks, and the 73rd Brigade, before it rejoined the division, 54 officers and 1,150 other ranks,² making a total for the whole division of 187 officers and 3,991 other ranks. Sketch 36.

In the 21st Division, the 62nd, 63rd and 64th Brigade

¹ The 14/Northumberland Fus., Pioneer battalion of the 21st Division, after working on road repairs had been ordered forward to put part of these trenches in a state of defence; but the battalion arrived to find the Guards already in position.

² The 73rd Brigade was still in the line and some of these casualties were suffered on the 27th.

26 Sept. losses were, respectively, 73 officers and 1,423 other ranks, 71 officers and 1,314 other ranks, and 37 officers and 1,023 other ranks, making a divisional total of 198 officers and 3,853 other ranks.¹

Many legends have grown up as regards the failure of the 21st and 24th Divisions at Loos; in particular, that thrust into action worn out by continuous night marching and unfed, they disgraced themselves and the New Army by retiring before the enemy. The men were certainly subjected to unnecessary hardship and kept longer hours on the road at night than was intended, owing to inadequate road control and the inexperience of the staff in dealing

¹ In detail the casualties of the two divisions were :—

21st Division.

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
62nd Brigade :		
12/Northumberland Fus.	22	459
13/	17	379
8/East Yorkshire	21 } 73	299
10/Green Howards	13	286
63rd Brigade, Hqrs.	2	1
8/Lincolnshire	22	444
8/Somerset L.I.	17 } 71	266
12/West Yorkshire	16	298
10/York and Lancaster	14	305
64th Brigade, Hqrs.	1	—
9/K.O.Y.L.I.	2	214
10/K.O.Y.L.I.	5 } 37	139
14/Durham L.I.	17	220
15/	12	450
Divisional Troops	17	93
	198	3,853
	4,051	

24th Division.

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
71st Brigade :		
9/Norfolk	13	202
9/Suffolk	7	137
8/Bedfordshire	2 } 40	49
11/Essex	18	353
72nd Brigade :		
8/Queen's	12	427
8/Buffs	24 } 75	534
9/East Surrey	15	462
8/R. West Kent	24	556
73rd Brigade, Hqrs.	3	—
12/Royal Fusiliers	12	263
9/Royal Sussex	18 } 54	361
7/Northamptonshire	11	366
13/Middlesex	10	160
Divisional Troops	18	121
	187	3,991
	4,178	

with a road system intersected by railways passable only at level crossings, a problem rarely met with in marching in England. But after each of their first three night marches the divisions were given a good rest in billets during the day, and after the last of these marches forty hours' rest. On the night of the 24th/25th, the eve of the battle, practically all the units had completed their march, the fourth of the series, by 2 A.M., and they did not have to move until 11 A.M., but owing to the din of the artillery bombardment and the expectation of an early move, the men although they had rest did not get much sleep. The night of the 25th/26th, part of which was spent marching through an area intersected by trenches and blocked at the bridges by returning transport, was certainly a trying one, and the exertions demanded of the men could largely have been avoided if officers who knew the ground and the trenches had been lent to the XI. Corps; if "Up" and "Down" routes across the area behind the battle had been fixed and sign-boarded; or even if large-scale maps had been provided. Conditions similar to those encountered by the 21st and 24th Divisions prevailed during the march up of the Guards Division on the 25th and 26th, and even the splendid march discipline of Lord Cavan's highly trained battalions was unequal to contending with the appalling confusion and congestion of the traffic, though their fighting efficiency was not affected.

The putting of the cooks under divisional control, by the corps, was absolutely contrary to all experience, and, so far from aiding, hindered food from reaching the units. Although all battalions did not get a hot meal during the 26th, they had with them the iron ration and the special portable rations. Want of water seems to have been felt more than want of food, for there was a lack of water-points. Experienced brigade staffs and fully trained regimental officers, alive to the necessity for fathering and taking care of the physical comforts and well-being of the men, would have seen to it that all opportunities for rest were used to the full, and that more rather than less food was got up by fair means or foul. It was as "old campaigners" that the divisions failed, and this, seeing how few experienced men they contained, can be no reproach to them.¹

¹ There is so much military experience as regards young and old soldiers summed up in Sir John Kincaid's "*Adventures in the Rifle Brigade*" in the Peninsula that an extract is quoted as Note III. at end of Chapter.

26 Sept. The exertions demanded of the 21st and 24th Divisions were, after all, small as compared with those of the original five divisions of professional soldiers of the B.E.F. in the retreat to the Seine in August-September 1914. These formations normally marched by night and received their rations irregularly; and yet, after retreating over two hundred miles, they turned and were able, without rest, to fight the battles of the Marne and the Aisne. To bring troops up to the battle by a series of night marches, in order to avoid observation, is a normal operation of war.

In bravery the twelve out of the twenty-six battalions of the two divisions, by which alone the attack on the 26th was made, were certainly not lacking. Without sufficient artillery support, they went forward under terrific fire into a re-entrant held on three sides by the enemy, their flanks completely open owing to the failure in very difficult circumstances of the 15th and 1st Divisions to capture Hill 70 and Hulluch. Gravely handicapped by having no previous initiation into the nature of war and by being kept too far back in general reserve, they were, as it turned out, asked to do a nearly impossible task. In spite of this and in spite of heavy losses, the battalions of the 72nd and 71st Brigades, who had the plain task of going straight forward, actually reached the wire of the German second position, and had they not found it both formidable and intact, they would undoubtedly have entered the position. No one has ever cast aspersion on the gallantry of the regiments which assaulted the great breach at Badajoz without success. As it was, many men remained lying in front of the wire until the enemy captured them by approaching from the flank and rear. The spirit of the men rallied by Br.-General Mitford in Alley 4 was of the right sort; they did not want to retire, they wanted to "get a bit back", but did not know how to act. The battalions of the 21st Division confronted with an unexpected situation at Bois Hugo, failed to be equal to it. Bravery is not sufficient to win battles, the subordinate leaders must be able to lead, take advantage of every opportunity and meet every situation. The chance afforded to the 24th Division by the entrance made by the 2/Welch into the enemy's trenches was not utilized. Strength must be husbanded and bravery must be directed, and to do so effectively requires of the staff and senior regimental officers years of patient training in peace and much experience of war. The 21st and 24th Divisions

failed because the direction of large bodies of troops is an art which cannot be acquired in a year of hard training. Rank and file, if of good will, can be taught the elements of their duties—to march, shoot and obey—in a few months. Soldiers may thus be created in a short time, but not officers; still less divisions, which, composed of all arms, require not only that individuals and units should be fully trained, but also a knowledge of staff work and team work which takes much experience and long practice to acquire.

2ND DIVISION : THE FAILURE OF CARTER'S FORCE TO RECAPTURE THE QUARRIES

The advance of the Guards Division into the battle line in the afternoon of the 26th, and the relief of the 21st and 24th Divisions by its 1st and 2nd Brigades during the following night, succeeded in stabilizing the situation south of the Vermelles—Hulluch road. North of that road, on the front of the I. Corps, matters were less satisfactory. According to General Haig's orders for the 26th,¹ the I. Corps should have attacked Cité St. Elie at 11 A.M. on that day, in conjunction with the general forward movement against the German second position between Hulluch and Bois Hugo by the IV. and XI. Corps, already described. For this purpose, the 2nd Division, driven back to its trenches in the original attack on the 25th September, and ordered to stand fast, was to provide a composite brigade,² under Lieut.-Colonel B. C. M. Carter, 1/King's, which was to be in the 7th Divisional area by 7 A.M. The failure to recapture the Quarries during the early hours of the 26th had, however, altered the situation; for so long as the Germans held this commanding position along the top of the low crest, with supports close at hand and safe from artillery fire in the caves and recesses, an advance past its southern flank against Cité St. Elie was hardly practicable. Carter's Force, instead of advancing on the Cité, was therefore ordered to carry out a renewed attack on the Quarries. Various difficulties, due chiefly to the state of the trenches after the heavy rain, and to the abandoned and reeking gas cylinders lying in them, delayed the preparations; and, in order to be up to time for

¹ See page 309.

² Consisting of three battalions, 1/K.R.R.C. (Lieut.-Colonel G. A. Armytage), 1/R. Berkshire (Major L. W. Bird) and 2/Worcestershire (Lieut.-Colonel G. Lambton). They marched independently to Vermelles, assembling there at 10 A.M. on the 26th.

26 Sept. an attack eventually fixed to take place at 4 P.M., the 2/Worcestershire, and two companies and the machine guns of the 1/K.R.R.C. with it, had to move for the last part of the way to their starting place over the open. Guessing the direction of their objective by the fall of the shells of the bombardment that had been going on for two hours, the two battalions in their advance suddenly found themselves faced by the old German front trench, very deep and with very few places where it was easy to scramble out. The men could only emerge a few at a time, and were further delayed by enemy bombers working down the communication trenches from the Quarries to meet them. After considerable loss of time, progress was resumed, the Worcestershire and K.R.R.C. advancing by alternate platoons and sections, so as to ensure the "fire and movement" of pre-war training. In spite of heavy casualties, they reached a partly dug communication trench astride the Loos—Haisnes—La Bassée road, some two hundred yards short of the Quarries, their right in touch with the 7th Division in Breslau Avenue, leading up to Stone Alley. Here they were ordered to remain by a staff officer of that division, and, as no further orders came for them to continue their advance, they set about consolidating.¹ Major-General Sir T. Capper commanding the 7th Division, who had personally assisted in the organization and the advance of Carter's Force, rode with it until stopped by wire and then accompanied it on foot. He was mortally wounded soon after the attack had started. One of the most highly trained and talented officers in the Army, no one had been more certain of final victory, and to attain it no one more ready to lay down his life. The command of the division devolved on Br.-General H. E. Watts, the senior brigadier, Colonel R. A. Berners succeeding him in the 21st Brigade.

NOTE I

THE FRENCH TENTH ARMY ON THE 26TH SEPTEMBER 1915

Map 1. The French Tenth Army was unable to make any progress of Sketch importance on the 26th September, and its action brought little aid 18. to the British.

At 8.50 A.M. on the 26th, General Foch directed the commander of the Tenth Army not to attack until he had re-established order in his divisions, and relieved those which had suffered most heavily;

¹ The rest of the 1/K.R.R.C. and the 1/R. Berkshire came up at night. Carter's Force remained in the Quarries sector until the 29th September, when it was relieved and rejoined the 2nd Division.

the artillery preparation was to be continued until these measures had been effected. It was therefore not until shortly before noon that the Tenth Army recommenced its attack. 26 Sept.

Meanwhile the French Commander-in-Chief, far from agreeing with General Foch's views, informed him by telephone at 10 A.M. that "we must not think of forcing the crest of Vimy ridge". His desire was to reserve all the men and munitions possible for Champagne, where "fruitful results seem to be offered". He directed General Foch to "go cautiously (*agir sagement*) with the IX., XVII., XII. and III. Corps and support the British offensive with the left wing "[XXXIII. and XXI. Corps] of the Tenth Army. In addition, "some intact divisions should be kept in reserve." At 10.45 A.M. General Joffre, having heard from the Tenth Army of the results attained on the 25th, ordered General Foch to come and see him at Dury (3½ miles south of Amiens), and gave him the following directions:—"Stop the attacks of the Tenth Army, taking care to avoid giving the British the impression that we are leaving them to attack alone, or the Germans that our offensive is slackening off. Economize ammunition. Try, if possible, to send the Commander-in-Chief without delay two divisions, and to diminish the number of troops in first line, first in the IX. Corps already placed on the defensive, taking one or perhaps two divisions out of its front to give them a rest. Then do the same with the corps of the centre, but with precautions, and, in any case, not before the evening of the 27th, when, and not sooner, the events in progress will have taken their definite form. Finally, prepare for the departure of the I. Cavalry Corps."

The French infantry attacks, begun about noon, made very small progress, and again only on the left. The XXI. Corps, on the left of the attacking force, three miles south of the British, re-captured the Bois en Hache, and passed beyond the Souchez stream, almost to the Bois de Givenchy, that is, its furthest advance was about half a mile; the left of the XXXIII. (on the right of the XXI.) captured Souchez village and the cemetery, but its right gained very little ground; the III. Corps failed in its attacks, and its situation at night remained "confused". The XII. Corps at first announced a brilliant success—that Les Tilleuls, a mile ahead, and the rise of ground north of it, had been taken; preparations were made to exploit the success, a report of which was telegraphed to General Joffre, by sending up a brigade of cavalry "for the pursuit"; but at 9 P.M. it was ascertained that these localities had not been taken and that the attacking regiments had received "a complete check". It was only one of the many pieces of false news that had floated round the battlefield. Actually the III. and XII. Corps had obtained "peu de résultats le 26 et dans la nuit du 26 au 27; de plus il règne dans leur secteur une grande confusion".

At 5.25 P.M. on the 26th, having heard from Sir John French that the British right was hard pressed and might suffer defeat unless the left of the Tenth Army acted quickly and with energy, General d'Urbal set about forming a new reserve by ordering the withdrawal during the night of a regiment from each division of the IX. and XVII. Corps. Then, at 7.20 P.M., he directed the attacks to be continued north of Arras at daybreak on the 27th.

General Foch on his return from his interview with General Joffre ordered the Tenth Army to economize ammunition, and to

26 Sept. bring the 152nd Division (IX. Corps) out of the line. On the strength, however, of the supposed success of the day, in a telephone conversation he persuaded the Commander-in-Chief to cancel his orders for taking two divisions from the Tenth Army, and the Sixth Army was ordered to find them.

NOTE II

THE CHAMPAGNE BATTLE OF THE FRENCH SECOND AND FOURTH ARMIES, 26TH-29TH SEPTEMBER

Sketch 18. On the 26th September further progress was made in Champagne towards the German second position; it was reached on a front of $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and a temporary lodgment actually effected at one place. The total number of prisoners captured reached 16,000. Desperate attacks against the second position on the 27th, 28th and 29th only led to small breaches being made in it, and heavy losses and the exhaustion of the ammunition supply forced General Joffre to order a provisional halt in the offensive.

NOTE III

YOUNG AND OLD SOLDIERS

"The young soldier when he first arrives in camp or bivouac will (unless forced to do otherwise) always give in to the languor and fatigue which oppress him, and fall asleep. He awakens most probably after dark, cold and comfortless. He would gladly eat some of the undressed meat in his haversack, but he has no fire on which to cook it. He would gladly shelter himself in one of the numerous huts which have arisen around him since he fell asleep, but as he lent no hand in the building he is thrust out. He attempts at the eleventh hour to do as others have done, but the time has gone by, for all the materials that were originally within reach have already been appropriated by his more active neighbours, and there is nothing left for him but to pass the remainder of the night as he best can, in hunger, in cold, and in discomfort, and he marches before daylight in the morning without having enjoyed either rest or refreshment. Such is often the fate of young regiments for a longer period than would be believed, filling the hospitals and leading to all manner of evils."

"On the other hand, see the old soldiers come to their ground. Let their feelings of fatigue be great or small, they are no sooner suffered to leave the ranks than every man rushes to secure whatever the neighbourhood affords as likely to contribute towards his comfort for the night. Swords, hatchets, and bill-hooks are to be seen hewing and hacking at every tree and bush within reach,—huts are quickly reared, fires are quickly blazing, and while the kettle is boiling, or the pound of beef frying, the tired, but happy souls are found toasting their toes around the cheerful blaze, recounting their various adventures until the fire has done the needful, when they fall on like men, taking especial care however that whatever their inclination may be, they consume no part of the provision which properly belongs to the morrow. The meal finished, they

arrange their accoutrements in readiness for an emergency (caring little for the worst that can befall them for the next twenty-four hours), when they dispose themselves for rest, and be their allowance of sleep long or short they enjoy it, for it does one's heart good to see 'the rapture of repose that's there'."—"Adventures in the "Rifle Brigade: Random Shots from a Rifleman"—undated edition in one volume—by Captain Sir John Kincaid, pp. 209-10.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

27TH SEPTEMBER

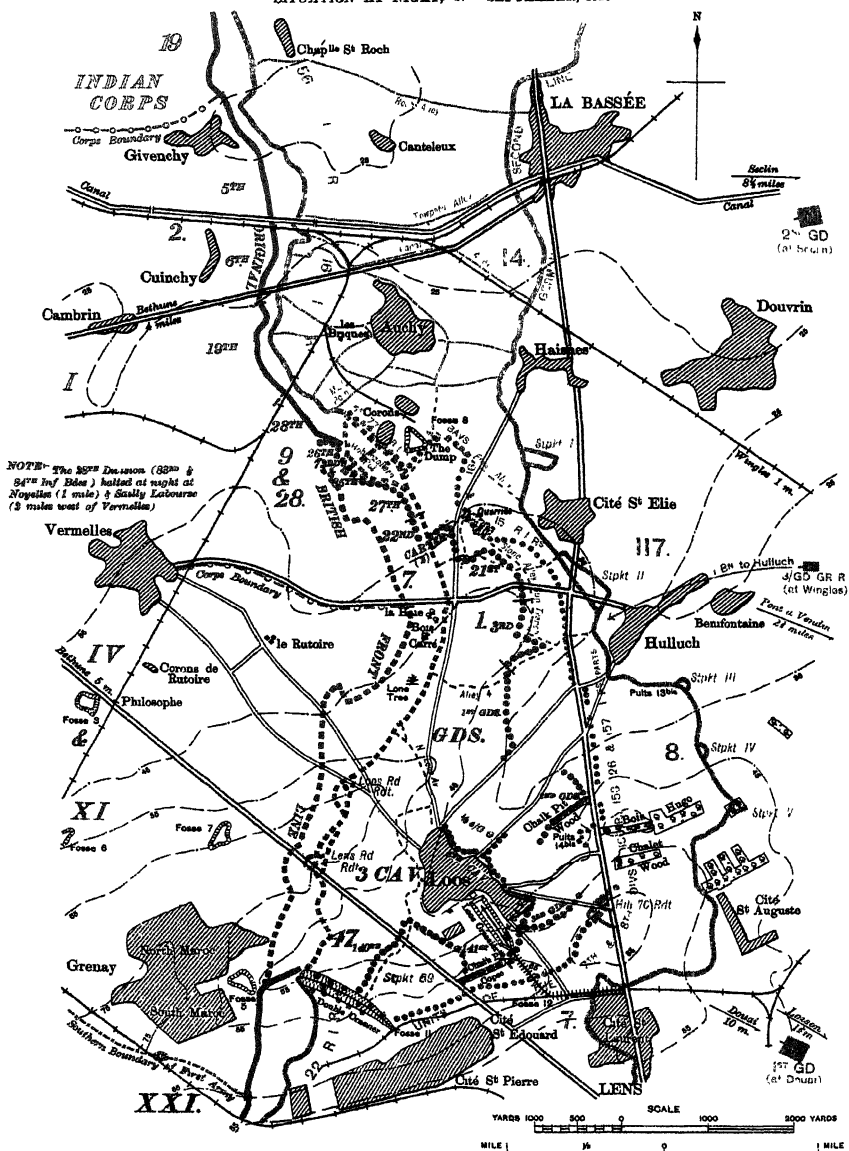
(Map 1 ; Sketches 18, 36, 37, 38)

THE LOSS OF FOSSE 8

Sketch 36. **ALTHOUGH** the position on Hill 70 had been lost and Carter's Force had been unable to recapture the Quarries, the arrival of the 3rd Cavalry Division, the Guards Division and Carter's Force in the front line had, by the night of the 26th, made the general position fairly secure against attack. North of where these reinforcements had been put in only the situation of the 73rd Brigade (of the 24th Division, attached to the 9th Division) holding the eastern front of Fosse 8 gave cause for immediate anxiety. The three battalions east of the Fosse from Fosse Alley northwards—9/R. Sussex, 12/Royal Fusiliers and 7/Northamptonshire¹—had had little food and practically no water for forty-eight hours, nor was there any prospect of supplies coming up. The men besides being utterly inexperienced in war were worn out and half asleep, many sound asleep.² During the afternoon of the 26th the trenches on either side of the Three Cabarets, a road junction at the eastern

¹ See page 304.

² Br.-General R. G. Jelf, who took over the command of the brigade on the 26th, in his report states : " No communication of any kind had been established with my battalions either by wire or orderly, and I attribute this to the fact that all battalions and the brigade staff were quite ignorant of the rudiments of what to do in the trenches, how communications were established, the method of drawing rations, etc., they never having been in trenches in their lives before. And I can confidently assert, after many months of trench warfare, that it would have taxed to the uttermost the resources of any Regular battalions with plenty of experience behind them, to have kept themselves supplied, under similar conditions."



end of the group of houses north of Fosse 8, were under heavy shell fire from the German batteries about Haisnes and Auchy, and the battalions showed signs of wavering. Br.-General R. G. Jelf, on his arrival in the late afternoon, found the situation serious. During the night the trenches east of the Dump and the communication trenches leading forward to them from the Hohenzollern Redoubt remained continuously under fire, and at break of day (27th), on a signal of two red rockets, the enemy began an intense bombardment of this sector with guns of all calibres. He then attacked, perhaps as a feint, the left of the 21st Brigade in Stone Alley, where, after an initial success, he was driven off by a counter-attack of the local reserve, the 2/Wiltshire (under Major C. G. Forsyth, who was wounded).¹ Shortly afterwards some six hundred to a thousand Germans,² who had crossed the open ground from Haisnes under cover of darkness to within assaulting distance, rushed the position about the junction of Fosse and Slag Alleys, which was also the point of junction of the 12/Royal Fusiliers with the 7/Northamptonshire. Bombing northwards, they forced the Northampton back into the cottages (Corons de Pekin) north of the Dump, and established themselves on the mound itself, from which they soon opened heavy machine-gun fire on any sign of movement over the six hundred yards of open space between the Dump and the Hohenzollern Redoubt. About noon German reinforcements arrived, and bombing southwards they pressed back the Royal Fusiliers along Slag Alley and past the south of the Dump. They then began to organize an attack against the Hohenzollern Redoubt. In the exhausted condition of his brigade, Br.-General Jelf considered that it was useless to attempt to retake the Dump, and therefore decided to withdraw from the Corons, abandoning Fosse Trench and Dump Trench, and establish a new front along the eastern face of the redoubt, whence a good field of fire could be obtained over the open ground between it and the Dump. Sketch 37.

Major-General Thesiger, commanding the 9th Division, having heard that the 73rd Brigade was unsteady, had gone forward personally to investigate the situation about Fosse 8, but, on reaching the eastern face of the Hohenzollern, he, with two of his staff, was killed. A thorough

¹ Lieut.-Colonel B. H. Leatham had been killed on the 26th.

² Parties of the *Composite Bavarian Regiment (Staubwasser)* and *91st Reserve Regiment*. See Note I. Chapter XVI.

27 Sept. soldier and a trained staff officer, in command of a division before he was 47 years of age, his loss, like that of General Capper, was irreparable. General Haig who heard of the death of General Thesiger whilst visiting I. Corps headquarters, ordered Major-General Bulfin, commanding the 28th Division¹ now on its way from Bailleul to the battlefield, to assume command of the 9th Division zone. General Bulfin arrived at divisional headquarters about 3 P.M., and soon after received an order from I. Corps to deliver a counter-attack with the 26th Brigade (Br.-General A. B. Ritchie) to retake Dump and Fosse Trenches, as his own 85th Brigade, intended for this purpose, was delayed.² The 26th Brigade had had heavy fighting in capturing and holding Fosse 8, and earlier in the day it had sent some detachments of the 5/Camerons and 8/Black Watch to assist the 73rd Brigade. Now there were only some six hundred men available,³ but they advanced again from the original British front trenches with great spirit. Suffering heavily from shell and machine-gun fire, the leading lines were able to reach the eastern face of the Hohenzollern, but beyond this they could not go under the fire by which the approaches to the Fosse were swept. Nevertheless, this reinforcement came very opportunely to the assistance of the 73rd Brigade, which had run out of hand-grenades, and, for the time, the Hohenzollern was saved. The German attack from both sides of the Dump towards the redoubt was already developing, and strong bombing detachments were working along North Face and

Sketch
37.

¹ The 28th Division, after its tremendous losses in the Second Battle of Ypres, 15,533 of all ranks (see "1915" Vol. I. p. 356), had a fortnight's rest, leaving the 85th Brigade in the line. It then on the 14th June took over a sector of the Ypres front, St. Eloi and afterwards Wyttschaete. There it was relieved on the 20th-22nd September by the 2nd Canadian Division, and moved to Bailleul in Second Army reserve.

The 2nd Canadian Division under Major-General R. E. W. Turner (of the 3rd Brigade) had arrived in France from the United Kingdom on the 14th September. It had been formed in Canada, and most of its units arrived at Shorncliffe by the end of May 1915, where they joined the supernumeraries left behind by the 1st Division (see "1914" Vol. II. p. 9), and were trained as a division. On the arrival of the 2nd Division in France, the Canadian Corps was formed, Lieut.-General E. A. H. Alderson leaving the 1st Division to take command, and being succeeded in the division by Major-General A. Currie (of the 2nd Brigade).

² It did not reach the Hohenzollern Redoubt until 8 P.M. The original arrangements were for one brigade of the 28th Division to move by motor-bus, one by train, and the third to march. At the last moment, however, G.H.Q. were unable to arrange this, and the whole division marched. As a result of the delay, it was too late to save Fosse 8.

³ The losses of the 26th Brigade during the three days' fighting at Fosse 8 were 79 officers and 2,100 other ranks.

South Face, two communication trenches leading up to the redoubt from the Dump, on which the Germans were seen digging hard. These enemy parties were now effectively checked after close fighting with both bombs and rifle fire,¹ and as an advance against the redoubt across the open was impracticable, they withdrew to Dump Trench south-west of the Dump.

The loss of the Dump and of Fosse 8, the withdrawal of the 73rd Brigade to the Hohenzollern, and the decision to stop any further attempt of Carter's Force to re-occupy the Quarries, gave the keys of the position to the enemy, and left exposed both flanks of the two battalions (6/Royal Scots Fusiliers and 10/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) of the 27th Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel G. G. Loch) that had re-occupied Fosse Alley during the previous night in order to protect the right of the 73rd Brigade.² Their position was raked from end to end by fire, and early in the afternoon German bombers advanced along the alley from both flanks, from the Quarries and the Dump. Lieut.-Colonel Mackenzie (10/Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) as well as Lieut.-Colonel Northey (9/Scottish Rifles of the 28th Brigade) was wounded, and soon the withdrawal of the garrison of Fosse Alley became inevitable. This operation was carried out with deliberation and in three stages, under heavy fire, to Quarry Trench and Big Willie in the line of the original German front trenches.

It may be added that an effort to recapture Fosse 8 was made by I. Corps order in the early morning of the 28th. The 85th Brigade (28th Division), which was on its way up to relieve the 9th Division and 73rd Brigade in the Hohenzollern area, was instructed to take part in the attack. Its commander, Br.-General C. E. Pereira, and his brigade major were early wounded, and although the utmost endeavours were made by Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Roberts (3/Royal Fusiliers), who took over command, such was the difficulty in moving up owing to the state of the ground and the congestion of the trenches, that at 6 A.M. on the 28th but two battalions of the brigade were in position, and it was too late to attack. The only troops which actually made the attempt, at 2.30 A.M., were those

¹ Corporal J. D. Pollock, 5/Cameron Highlanders, was awarded the V.C. for conspicuous bravery in standing outside a trench under machine-gun fire for over an hour, bombing the enemy's bombers below him until he was wounded.

² See page 304.

27 Sept. of the third battalion of Carter's Force, the 1/Royal Berkshire, which during the 27th had been employed in digging trenches. The distance to go was about half a mile, the ground to be crossed unknown to the battalion, and very much cut up and intersected by trenches and wire; but there was bright moonlight, and Colonel Carter himself led the advance. Unfortunately the good light enabled the enemy to detect the Berkshire when they had traversed half the distance, and open heavy fire on them. Nevertheless they pressed on to within seventy yards of the Fosse, when they were forced to stop. The support companies were brought up, and they actually reached the Dump, only to be driven off by bombing. As it was now getting daylight, further attack was stopped by Colonel Carter, and the 1/Royal Berkshire reorganized in the old British trenches. It had lost its commander, Major L. W. Bird, wounded, the second-in-command, Captain M. C. Radford, killed, 11 other officers and 288 other ranks.¹

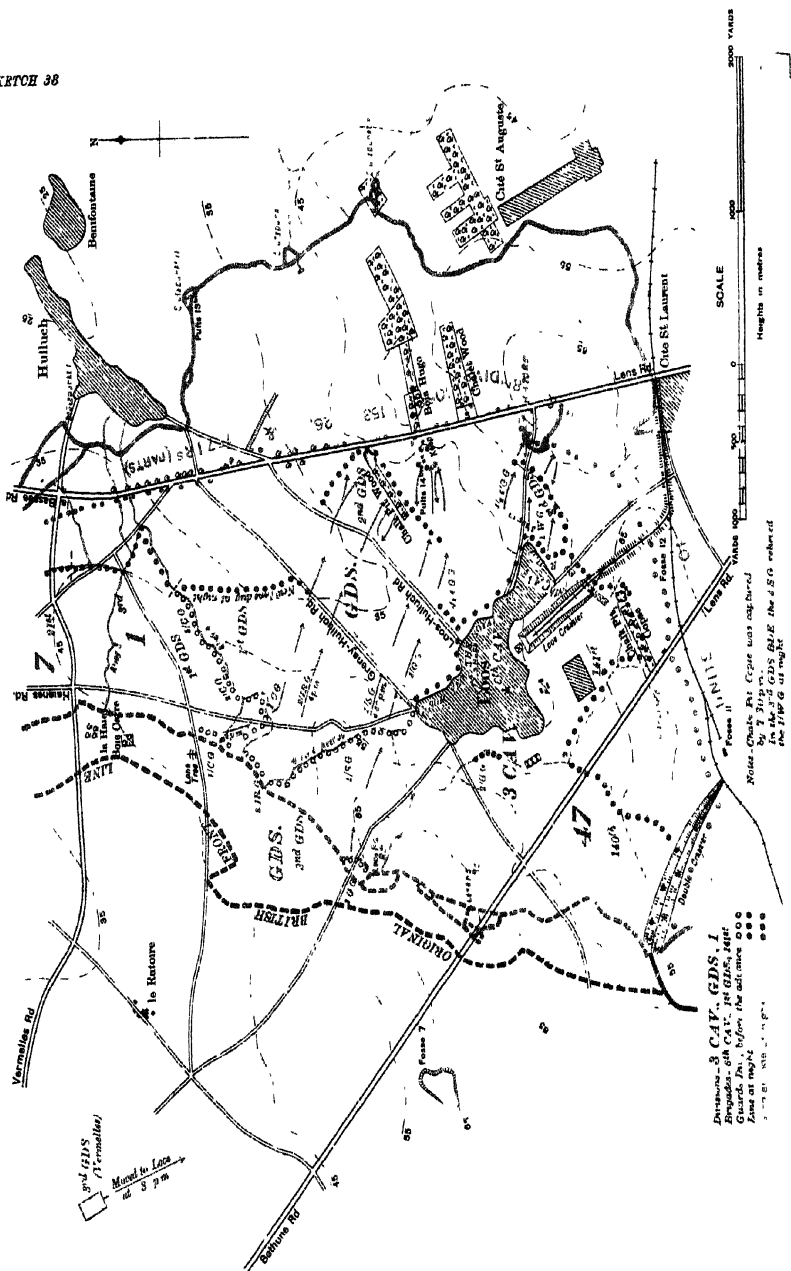
THE ADVANCE OF THE GUARDS DIVISION SOUTH OF THE HULLUCH ROAD

Sketch General Haig's orders for the 27th, issued at 11.30 P.M.
37. on the 26th before Fosse 8 was lost, but with the knowledge that the *2nd Guard Reserve Division* had been identified on his front, gave directions for the holding of the line and the pulling out of a new general reserve. The XI. Corps was to secure the front between Loos and Hulluch with the Guards Division; and the 21st and 24th Divisions were to be re-formed as soon as possible. The IV. Corps was made responsible for Loos, Major-General Briggs and the 3rd Cavalry Division being placed under General Rawlinson for the purpose until the cavalry could be relieved by infantry. It was also to hold the front between the left of the Guards Division and the right of the I. Corps. The 15th Division was to be sent back to Noeux les Mines to the general reserve. In the I. Corps, the 1st Division was to be returned to the IV. Corps—the 7th extending and taking over its trenches—and the 9th Division was to be withdrawn to Béthune, in general reserve, as soon as it was relieved by the 28th Division already on the march from Strazeele to Béthune.

¹ 2/Lieut. A. B. Turner, of the Royal Berkshire, who died subsequently of wounds, was awarded the V.C. for conspicuous bravery in leading bombing attacks and covering the retirement of the battalion.

SOOT

ATTACK OF THE GUARDS DIVISION, ON MONDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER



There was a special direction to General Haking (XI. 27 Sept. Corps) to submit a project and make arrangements for the capture of Hill 70 in the afternoon of the next day; for unfortunately the redoubt on it dominated the new front in the Loos valley.

After a consultation, General Haking and General Lord Cavan (Guards Division) decided, and it was approved by General Haig, that the attack on Hill 70 should be delivered from the north and the west simultaneously. This required a preliminary move. The operation was to begin with an advance of the 2nd Guards Brigade eastwards from North Loos Avenue across the Loos valley and the Loos—Hulluch road against Puits 14 bis and Chalk Pit Wood. Thence it would work forward through the two strips of wood, Bois Hugo and Chalet Wood, and, established in the latter, refuse its left flank towards the German second position north of Cité St. Auguste. Then it was to deliver an assault from the southern edge of the wood against Hill 70 Redoubt. A frontal attack from the west by the 3rd Guards Brigade—which was to be moved forward during the afternoon from reserve at Vermelles—was to be timed to coincide as nearly as possible with the attack of the 2nd Guards Brigade against the hill from the north. The 1st Guards Brigade, on the left of the 2nd, was to advance from Alley 4 and secure the line of the Lens—La Bassée road as soon as Puits 14 bis and Chalk Pit Wood were seen to be occupied. The advance of the 2nd Guards Brigade, after an artillery bombardment¹ of the points of attack, was to begin at 4 P.M. By way of distracting the enemy's attention from the front of attack, the 47th Division was to renew its efforts to capture the whole of Chalk Pit Copse, and a discharge of gas was to be made on the Cuinchy front between the Vermelles—La Bassée road and the canal, in the 2nd Division area.

Unfortunately rain, fog and low clouds made it impossible for the Flying Corps to render much assistance on the 27th, although it was able to co-operate in some effective counter-battery work.

About 2 P.M. the news of the loss of Fosse 8 reached First Army Headquarters. Sir John French had just left them, having promised to use all his influence with General Joffre to urge the French Tenth Army to press on, and

¹ The bombardment was arranged as follows :—
12.30-3 P.M. By No. 1 Group H.A.R. and IV. Corps artillery;
3.40-4 P.M. By the Guards Division artillery.

27 Sept. General Haig immediately proceeded to I. Corps headquarters (Chateau Prieure St. Pry, $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles south of Béthune), where he interviewed General Gough. He then went to IV. Corps headquarters (Vaudricourt) close by, and from there, at 3.10 P.M., after a discussion with General Rawlinson, he telephoned to General Haking to enquire whether it was possible to postpone or stop the attack of the Guards Division. The situation at Fosse 8 made it, he thought, undesirable to use the whole of the division in a new attack. General Haking doubted the possibility of informing the leading battalions of the 2nd Guards Brigade of the cancellation of the order in time, but the 3rd Guards Brigade, on the way from Vermelles towards Loos, could be stopped. In the circumstances, General Haig gave directions that the attack was to be limited, and not to be pressed beyond the line Hill 70—Puits 14 bis—Chalk Pit Wood, that is practically the line of the Lens road. Instructions were accordingly sent by Lord Cavan to the brigadiers concerned, and the attack, except that of the 1st Guards Brigade, proceeded, although the main feature of the plan—the assault from Chalet Wood southwards against Hill 70 Redoubt—had now, owing to the limitation imposed, to be abandoned.

Sketch 38. The 2nd Guards Brigade (Br.-General J. Ponsonby), from its trenches about North Loos Avenue, on the western slope of the Loos valley, could see its objectives about a mile away on the further slope of the valley. Puits 14 bis, the white sides of its shell standing out, with a high chimney alongside, the Chalk Pit, 700 yards further north, and the low scrub of Chalk Pit Wood were all clear landmarks.¹ As the entire advance had to be made over the open ground of the valley, to cover its northern flank the 1st Guards Brigade (Br.-General G. P. T. Feilding) was ordered to establish a smoke barrage south of Hulluch; and it was also to keep the enemy's trenches near Hulluch under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. A fresh breeze was blowing from the west, and smoke balls, 144 in all, thrown by a party of the 1st Guards Brigade bombers were exceedingly effective. By 4 P.M. a thick smoke cloud lay over a large area south of Hulluch, the country between that village and Bois Hugo remaining completely lost to sight until 4.40 P.M. The German batteries behind Hulluch and the second position concentrated their fire on the

¹ The 13th Siege Battery, aided by air observation, had brought both Puits 14 bis and the Chalk Pit under heavy and accurate fire.

smoke, and heavy rifle fire was also poured into the cloud 27 Sept. in the belief no doubt that the attack was moving forward under its shelter.

With its northern flank thus screened, the advance of the 2nd Guards Brigade across the valley was carried out rapidly, in perfect formation, and with little loss. The 2/Irish Guards (Lieut.-Colonel Hon. L. J. P. Butler) led the way with Chalk Pit Wood as objective, whilst the 1/Scots Guards (Lieut.-Colonel S. H. Godman), echeloned to the right rear of the Irish, was to assault Puits 14 bis as soon as the Chalk Pit had been made good. By 4.45 P.M. the Irish Guards had entered Chalk Pit Wood unopposed, covered by its foliage which prevented observation from the German main position in Bois Hugo. Shortly afterwards their left successfully occupied the Chalk Pit itself. The Scots Guards now moved forward towards Puits 14 bis, their left passing through and carrying forward with it the greater part of the Irish Guards in Chalk Pit Wood and the Chalk Pit before the latter had consolidated those positions. In crossing the open between the wood and the Lens road heavy machine-gun fire was suddenly opened from the edge of Bois Hugo, sweeping the whole length and breadth of the attack. Lieut.-Colonel Godman was wounded, and eleven other officers were either killed or wounded, but in spite of very heavy casualties the attack went on and a small party of the Scots Guards reached the Puits buildings. This however was the limit of the effort and shortly before 5 P.M. the majority of the Scots and Irish Guards who had gone forward were falling back in some confusion. Many stayed in Chalk Pit Wood and the Chalk Pit, but others continued their retirement.¹ It was not until the line of the Loos—Hulluch road was reached that this retirement could be checked, and the men re-formed. At this time, about 5.15 P.M., the 1/Coldstream Guards (Lieut.-Colonel A. G. E. Egerton) came up to support the Irish Guards and, crossing the Loos—Hulluch road, took these troops forward again to Chalk Pit Wood, the line being re-established without further incident along the eastern edge of the Chalk Pit.

About the same time two companies of the 3/Grenadier Guards (Colonel N. A. L. Corry) arrived to support the

¹ According to a story in circulation soon after, but never confirmed, an order, "Retire!", emanating from some Germans in Chalk Pit Keep, was shouted and passed along.

27 Sept. Scots Guards. They suffered heavy loss in moving up the slope towards the Puits, but a small party succeeded in reaching it and reinforcing the party of the Scots Guards still near the buildings, whilst some bombers put out of action a machine gun in the upper storey of the Keep, a small red house on the north side of the Puits. So heavy was the fire from Bois Hugo at every attempt to send more men to the Puits, that it seemed utter waste of life to persevere, and a position was taken up extending southwards from the southern end of Chalk Pit Wood towards Loos. Under cover of darkness, this new line was entrenched, and the remnants of the gallant party of the 1/Scots Guards under Captain J. H. Cuthbert, who had remained fighting for the Puits throughout the evening, withdrew to it.¹

The 3rd Guards Brigade (Br.-General F. J. Heyworth), which was to capture Hill 70 from the west, left its reserve position about Vermelles at 3 P.M., and marched by the Vermelles—Loos road towards Loos village in column of fours, with five hundred yards between battalions. On reaching the Loos Road Redoubt on the western ridge of the Loos valley, each battalion deployed successively into artillery formation, columns of platoons in fours, and thence in broad daylight moved across country. Soon after passing the brow of the ridge, heavy artillery fire, both shrapnel and high explosive, was opened from the right front, chiefly from the German batteries in the northern suburbs of Lens, in addition to long-range machine-gun fire. There were many casualties, and a number of the transport animals were hit.² Nevertheless, the battalions advanced with absolute steadiness, as onlookers record with admiration, reached the Loos defences, and took cover in trenches there, moving along them into the village. The 4/Grenadier Guards (Lieut.-Colonel G. C. Hamilton), which had led, entered Loos from the north-west, the 1/Welsh Guards (Lieut.-Colonel W. Murray-Threipland) from the west; and the remaining two battalions, the 2/Scots Guards (Lieut.-Colonel A. B. E. Cator) and 1/Grenadier Guards (Lieut.-Colonel G. F. Trotter), halted in support in Cemetery Trench west of the village, alongside the 1/23rd

¹ The casualties of the 2nd Guards Brigade during the period 26th-29th September were 42 officers and 1,266 other ranks, killed, wounded and missing, those of the 1/Scots Guards being 14 and 459.

² The road was cleared of vehicles at night-fall by the 1st Bridging Train R.E.

and 1/18th London of the 47th Division. As the 4/Grenadiers entered Loos a number of gas shells burst among the companies, putting out of action Lieut.-Colonel Hamilton, causing considerable delay and adding to the difficulties of organizing the attack. In the confusion half the battalion working round the northern side of the village lost touch with the remainder, and joined in with the troops of the 2nd Guards Brigade attacking Puits 14 bis. Br.-General J. Ponsonby (2nd Guards Brigade) ordered this detachment to halt on the Loos—Hulluch road and guard his right flank. Thus only two companies of the 4/Grenadiers—reduced to the strength of one—assembled east of Loos to lead the attack on Hill 70. Br.-General Heyworth, who was present in the village, thereupon ordered the 1/Welsh Guards to carry out the attack in conjunction with, and on the right of, the two companies of the 4/Grenadiers. It was close on 6 P.M. and nearly dusk before the assault, the baptism of fire of the Welsh Guards, was launched.

From the summit the lower part of Hill 70 is dead ground, the chalk slope being convex, and at first few casualties were incurred, but on reaching the upper part a violent machine-gun fire swept the lines. Casualties were at once extremely heavy, and after a few short rushes no further progress was possible. Twenty-five yards ahead could be seen through the dusk the strong wire entanglement in front of the redoubt. Every effort to move on again brought a burst of fire and further slaughter. A line had been reached, beyond which, in the words of a message, no one could live, and, as Lieut.-Colonel Murray-Threipland's instructions were on no account to go up to the crest of the hill, orders were given to dig in. About 11 P.M. the 2/Scots Guards arrived, and Lieut.-Colonel Cator, believing the forward position impossible to hold in daylight, decided to take up a more retired line on the upper terrace of the hill, about a hundred yards from the redoubt. To this the advanced troops withdrew, the Scots Guards now taking over the position, which was further entrenched and wired during the night. On the right, touch was gained with troops of the 3rd Cavalry Division, who connected with the 47th Division astride the Loos Crassier. On the left, the line was thrown back to the Loos—Hulluch road, leaving a gap, as the engineers sent up to work on the line discovered, between it and the 2nd Guards Brigade south of Chalk Pit Wood. The two

27 Sept.

27 Sept. companies of the 4/Grenadiers that had been halted on the road earlier in the evening now rejoined their unit.¹

The 1st Guards Brigade had remained in position in Alley 4 and the trenches in rear, but during the night the 2/Coldstream Guards began to dig a new line from Alley 4, opposite the south end of Hulluch, southwards towards the left of the 2nd Guards Brigade in Chalk Pit Wood.

Simultaneously with the Guards' attack on Hill 70, the 47th Division, south of Loos Crassier, had renewed its efforts, as ordered, to capture Chalk Pit Copse and the German strongpoint (known as *Stützpunkt 69*) astride the Lens—Béthune road near by. The operation was preceded by a very effective three-hour bombardment by the 40th Howitzer Battery,² the ranging of which was controlled by Br.-General Thwaites from his brigade headquarters at Valley Cross Roads, from which point observation was easy. The attack was organized by Lieut.-Colonel Hubback (1/20 London) and carried out from both ends of the copse by the bombers of the 1/17th, 1/19th, 1/20th and 1/28rd London Regiment, backed by a company of the last-named battalion. It was completely successful, and by 7.30 P.M. the whole of the Chalk Pit Copse, including the strongpoint, was in British possession with the loss of 2 killed and 14 wounded, whilst 150 dead Germans were found. During the night a new trench—which remained the front line for nearly three years—was dug along the eastern and southern edges of the copse, connecting up with the line previously held. The German communication trench leading to Cité St. Pierre was blocked.

On the Cuinchy front only half of the gas cylinders in position could be discharged owing to the run of the trenches, and the variable direction of the wind. After the gas was turned off, the patrols sent out were greeted with heavy fire. It was evident that the Germans had not been affected very much; they were seen with gas

¹ The casualties of the 3rd Guards Brigade during the period 26th-29th September were 27 officers and 674 other ranks, killed, wounded and missing.

² The accuracy of this fire, says a German (*26th Regiment*) account, was remarkable. There were no deep dug-outs, only shelters in the side of the two hundred yards of trench: "I myself was buried five times, several others had their skulls broken open by the splinters of hard chalk caused by the shell bursting in the trench itself. The sight of the agony all along the trench was terrible; one man near me had his head blown off, another was cut in two pieces in the middle, and another was blown right out of the trench in pieces. By the time the infantry attack was made, most of the trench had fallen in."

helmets on, and had lighted petrol fires on their parapets. 27 Sept. The 2nd Division, therefore, did not undertake an infantry attack.¹

At 8.15 P.M. First Army headquarters received an intercepted German wireless message to the effect that the British Guards had attacked north of Lens and had broken through, and that the wireless station, then at Loison, behind Lens, was falling back 4 miles. General Haig thereupon ordered General Rawlinson, if the report were true, to send forward at once the 3rd Cavalry Division from Loos, supported by infantry and machine guns, to occupy Vendin le Vieil, Annay and Pont à Vendin before daylight. These orders were delivered to Major-General Briggs, by six different messengers; but he having officer patrols with the leading Guards brigade, was able to reply to General Haig that the wireless was incorrect and he was disregarding the order. The report in the German message was of course without foundation; for, as has been seen, the German position had not been entered. The situation on the enemy side was, in fact, only too well in hand, for, in addition to the considerable reinforcements on the previous day, three battalions of the *Guards Corps* had arrived during the morning behind the Hulluch front, about Wingles, as a reserve to the *117th Division*. A Guard field artillery regiment was also sent up into the line behind Hulluch.²

NOTE

THE FRENCH TENTH ARMY ON THE 27TH SEPTEMBER

The French co-operation brought little direct assistance to the B.E.F. on the 27th. During the morning General d'Urbal decided to make his principal effort on his left. At 9.30 A.M. he placed the 154th Division at the disposal of the XXI. Corps (the nearest to the

¹ Corporal A. A. Burt, 1/Hertfordshire Regiment (attached to the 6th Brigade), was awarded the V.C. for conspicuous bravery on this day. When a large *Minenwerfer* bomb fell in his trench, though he had opportunity of taking cover, he wrenched the fuze from it and rendered it harmless.

² See Note, Chapter XVI as regards German reinforcements.

It was at this time the intention of the *Sixth Army* commander to employ the *Guard Corps* at once to retake Loos village and the original front position on Lone Tree ridge. Urgent appeals for reinforcements from the *Fourth Army* holding Vimy ridge opposite the French between Lens and Arras that had arrived during the day frustrated this plan, and the *Guard Corps* was sent piecemeal into the battle area instead of being used for one big effort. For this reason also the counter-offensive against the British First Army was postponed. Extracted from the official account by the *Sixth Army*, Schwarte, ii. p. 392.

27 Sept. British), and later a Spahi brigade, and he reinforced the XXXIII. with a Territorial regiment. He also ordered as many heavy batteries as possible to be brought from south of the Scarpe to Bully Grenay to deal with the enemy's guns at Angres and Liévin. He fixed the infantry attack to begin at noon, but later postponed it to 2 P.M. Neither the XXI. nor the XXXIII. Corps made more than insignificant progress. The other four corps were hardly in a position to do much, and at 3 P.M. General d'Urbal, by General Foch's instructions, definitely stopped their further offensive action until the XXI. and XXXIII. should have captured the northern part of Vimy ridge ; and he postponed further attack by these latter until 1.40 P.M. on the 28th.

CHAPTER XX

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

28TH SEPTEMBER—8TH OCTOBER

PREPARATIONS FOR RENEWING THE GENERAL ATTACK

(Sketches 18, 37, 39, 40)

THE ALLIED PLANS FOR CONTINUING THE BATTLE

DURING the night of the 27th/28th September Sir John French informed General Joffre that his reserves were being rapidly exhausted and his right was exposed, and, unless General d'Urbal attacked with energy and quickly, he would be forced to stop his offensive. General Joffre replied that he did not know enough of the situation to make an immediate decision, and charged General Foch, after he had come to an understanding with Sir John French, to indicate to what extent General d'Urbal could support the British attack. During the morning of the 28th, General Foch visited British Advanced G.H.Q. at Lillers, and it was agreed that the French 152nd Division (IX. Corps), then in reserve, should between the 28th and 30th relieve the British 47th Division, on the right of the B.E.F., so as to provide Sir John French with a reserve; and that the British should endeavour to master Hill 70, and attack towards Pont à Vendin (3 miles east of Hulluch). Later in the day General Foch decided to relieve the other two divisions of his IX. Corps (on the right of the Tenth Army) by the XVII. Corps and the 88th Territorial Division, and to send these two divisions also to the Loos sector. The French left would then be extended to include the village of Loos and Hill 70, of which General Foch considered it vital to gain possession, and the British freed to continue the offensive towards Pont à Vendin.

28 Sept. This considerable assistance would have the effect of liberating the 47th Division, the 2nd Brigade (which took over from the 3rd Cavalry Division released, after its invaluable services, on the evening of the 28th),¹ and the 2nd and 3rd Guards Brigades. Sir John French informed General Haig during a visit on the morning of the 28th, that he would withdraw the 21st and 24th Divisions for further training, and replace them in the XI. Corps by the 12th and 46th Divisions as early as possible.² Informed of the prospect of this reinforcement and of the reduction of his frontage, General Haig, on the 28th, held a conference at Vaudricourt with the commanders of the I., IV. and XI. Corps to discuss the continuation of the offensive against the German second position and a subsequent advance to the Haute Deule canal, the original objective. General Haking with the reconstituted XI. Corps (Guards, 12th and 46th Divisions) was to break through the second position between Cité St. Auguste and Hulluch, and advance thence at once to the canal about Pont à Vendin and occupy the crossings. General Rawlinson (IV. Corps) with the 1st, 15th and 47th Divisions, was to protect the right flank towards Hill 70, pending the arrival of the French troops, and press on towards Loison (2 miles east of Cité St. Laurent). If feasible, General Gough (I. Corps) with the 2nd, 7th and 28th Divisions, was to protect the left flank by capturing and holding Hulluch and sending two brigades forward to Wingles.

Sketch On this day the French Tenth Army achieved an
18. important success, part of the 6th Division reaching Point 140, the highest point of Vimy ridge in the German third position. Such alarm did this cause the enemy, that the greater part of the *Guard Corps*, which had been intended for use against the British, was diverted towards

¹ The 2nd Brigade had the 1/9th King's, 2/R. Sussex and 1/Northamptonshire in the line. Br.-General Pollard was wounded, and the brigade major, Major R. J. A. Terry, and two senior French officers, were killed whilst the handing over was taking place. Br.-General H. F. Thuillier succeeded to the command of the brigade.

² These two divisions, which had arrived on the Western front at the end of May and end of February, respectively, had been employed since then in the Ypres sector (Second Army).

The 12th Division, under Major-General F. D. V. Wing, left Bailleul and Armentières on the 27th-28th September by train and bus, assembling in the Verquin—Labourse—Noeux les Mines area (south of Béthune) on the 29th September.

The 46th (North Midland) Division, under Major-General Hon. E. J. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, left the Ypres sector by road and rail on the 1st-2nd October, assembling in the Béthune area on the 3rd October.

Vimy ridge.¹ General d'Urbal proposed to use the 152nd, 28 Sept. which had been detailed to relieve the British 47th Division, to exploit this success, but this was forbidden by General Foch.

It may be interpolated here that although the French gains were held during the night, General Foch considered that the best course was to suspend the offensive and prepare a new general attack in concert with the British. During the morning of the 29th he had another conference with Sir John French, and it was agreed to recommence the offensive together on the 2nd October.² This course received the approval of General Joffre. In Champagne, similarly, the first offensive was brought to an end on the 30th. No account was taken of what the Germans might do during the interval thus allowed them in which to improve their defences on the fronts attacked and to bring up reserves; nor was any suggestion made to shift the points of attack to other sectors behind which no enemy reserves were already accumulated.

In conformity with the general scheme for the con- Sketch
tinuation of the operations, the 2nd Guards Brigade, 37.
although its casualties already amounted to twelve hundred, had been ordered to deliver a further attack on Puits 14 bis on the afternoon of the 28th; for the buildings there gave the Germans good observation posts from which it would be difficult to conceal the preparations for a further offensive. Br.-General Ponsonby, whose headquarters, having been shelled out of Loos, were in a trench with the 1/Scots Guards, sent back a letter and a message, asking that the attack might be postponed till dark, as it had little chance of success in daylight; but, no reply being received before zero hour, the attack proceeded. The XI. Corps heavy artillery, in position about Vermelles and the Corons de Rutoire, bombarded the Puits and its buildings till

¹ In the course of the night of the 27th/28th and on the morning of the 28th, the right of the XXXIII. Corps and left of the III., opposite Vimy, which hitherto had got no further than the enemy's front trenches, captured the southern part of the Bois de la Folie, 2,000 yards from the old French line: General d'Urbal therefore decided the III. Corps should attack "à fond" with the XXI. and XXXIII. at 1.40 P.M. As it turned out, it was only the 6th Division of the III. that made any progress, some of its units at 3 P.M. reaching Point 140, the highest point of Vimy ridge in the German third position.

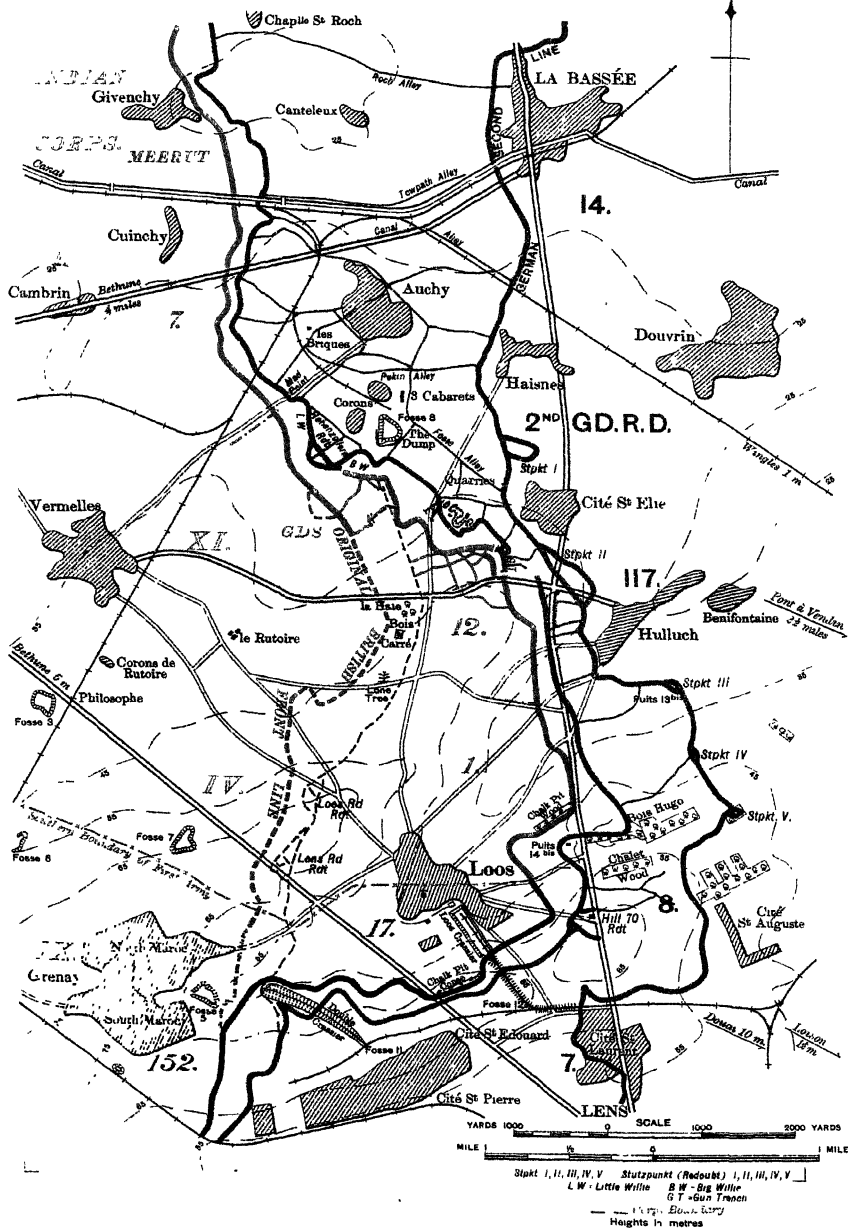
² The losses in the five days' fighting of the Tenth Army had been, 978 officers and 85,758 other ranks. By corps:— XXI., 7,172; XXXIII., 6,046; III., 11,018; XII., 5,478; XVII., 2,339; and IX., 4,688.

28 Sept. 3.40 P.M., and from then onwards the Guards Division artillery joined in against the same targets. Unfortunately, the main German position was not where the XI. Corps imagined it, but lay along the western edge of Bois Hugo on the Lens road, some hundred and fifty yards east of the Puits, so that the bombardment effected nothing but the destruction of some buildings. When, therefore, the two leading companies of the 1/Coldstream Guards moved forward at 4 P.M. from Chalk Pit Wood towards the ruins, machine-gun fire from concealed positions in front of Bois Hugo raked the extended lines; and, although one small party actually reached the Puits, all the members of it were either killed or taken prisoner. Seeing that a permanent success was out of the question owing to the fire from Bois Hugo Br.-General Ponsonby ordered the attack to be discontinued.¹

During the night and the following day, the trenches of the Guards Division were improved and strengthened. In the evening (29th September) the 3rd Guards Brigade in Loos and on Hill 70 was relieved by the 142nd Brigade (with the 1/17th London attached) of the 47th Division, which was to hold the line there until the arrival of the French troops, and the Guards then moved back into billets at Sailly Labourse. The Germans did not interfere except by shelling Loos and all buildings near by with 8-inch shell. They succeeded in hitting brigade headquarters.

On the 30th detailed instructions were issued for the preparation of the further offensive towards the Haute Deule canal. These included the completion of a new trench parallel to the Lens road between Chalk Pit Wood and Alley 4 as a starting-off line. This work was carried out during the night of the 30th September/1st October by working parties of the 1st and 2nd Guards Brigade and the 4/Coldstream Guards (Pioneers). The men dug without pause, under fire most of the time, from dark until 4 A.M. the next morning, in order to complete their task; for the ground was almost solid chalk, and provided one of the hardest bits of digging of the war. Their work done, the 1st and 2nd Guards Brigades were relieved by the 35th Brigade of the 12th Division, the 7/Suffolk (Lieut.-Colonel C. D. P. Crooke) going to the Chalk Pit position. The

¹ Lieut.-Colonel Egerton, the commanding officer of the 1/Coldstream, and his adjutant were killed by a shell at their headquarters in the Chalk Pit, and in addition seven other officers and 250 other ranks became casualties in this action.



1st and 2nd Guards Brigades were then withdrawn to 30 Sept. billets, the former at Mazingarbe, and the latter at Verquigneul.

During the nights following, the 1st/2nd and 2nd/3rd October, working parties of the 35th Brigade were employed in completing the trench system begun by the Guards, digging communication trenches, crossing places, etc. The work and all movement in the trenches and on the roads were constantly interrupted by heavy fire and many casualties were sustained.¹

The relief of the 47th Division and 2nd Brigade by the French IX. Corps (General Curé), consisting of the 152nd Division (General Chérière) and 17th Division (General Lancrenon), with the 18th Division (General Justinien Lefèvre) in reserve, began on the 30th September and was continued and completed during the nights of the 1st/2nd and 2nd/3rd October, the French taking over as far as the Puits 14 bis track. This relief, it will be recalled, should have taken place between the 28th and 30th September, but "bad weather and the mass of traffic on the roads delayed the transfer of the IX. Corps",² and General d'Urbal reported to General Foch on the night of the 29th/30th and again on the morning of the 30th that he would not be in a position to renew the attack before the 3rd October.

General Foch visited Sir John French at his chateau near Lillers on the 30th to inform him of the French plan. The new attack was to be executed simultaneously by the French Tenth Army and the British First Army and was to take advantage of the salient form of the German front between them. The British offensive would be in the direction of Loison—Pont à Vendin, that is south-east, on a 3-mile front. "The French attack would take the shape of an action starting from the crest of Bois de Givenchy—Bois de la Folie, also a 3-mile front, north-

¹ Major-General F. D. V. Wing, commanding the 12th Division, was killed by a shell on the afternoon of the 2nd October, whilst crossing the road near Quality Street (at the foot of Fosse 7), his advanced report centre. He was the third divisional commander killed in the battle. A born soldier, his handling of the artillery of the 3rd Division at Le Cateau had been masterly. His undaunted optimism during the bad days of the Retreat, and his quiet resolution had acted as a tonic on all who came in contact with him. Beloved by all who had ever served under and with him, he could ill be spared by the Army. Major-General A. B. Scott assumed command on the following day.

² French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 502. The IX. Corps had to march from the extreme right of the Tenth Army, south of Arras, to its extreme left.

30 Sept. "eastwards towards Mericourt ($2\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-east of "Lens) and Avion ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Lens)." The IX. Corps was to attack at the same time as the British and "enlarge the holding on Hill 70". In view of the delay in the movement of the IX. Corps, it was decided by the French and British commanders to make the combined attack on the 4th instead of the 3rd October.

A further conference between General Foch and Sir John French took place at the former's headquarters at Cercamps (20 miles west of Arras) on the 1st October. The British commander expressed doubts whether his share of the attack could be carried out until his flanks were covered, the right by the occupation of the whole of Hill 70, the left by the recapture of Fosse 8 and the Quarries. He desired that these actions should precede the general attack, the former being carried out by the French IX. Corps and the latter by the British. General Foch contended that it would be impossible for the IX. Corps to maintain itself in the Hill 70 position, exposed as it would be to convergent artillery fire, if the capture were an isolated operation. It was finally agreed that the attack against Fosse 8 should take place on the 4th October; that the IX. Corps should support it merely by a strong artillery demonstration against the part of Hill 70 held by the enemy; and that the general attack should be postponed again to the 5th October, when the IX. Corps would complete the conquest of Hill 70. General Joffre, who arrived at Cercamps in the evening, agreed with these plans, and increased the allotment of artillery ammunition to the Tenth Army.

The preparations of the First Army for the offensive were greatly hampered by the enemy being in possession of Hill 70, and the even more dominating position of Fosse 8. German observers on the Dump overlooked the ground to the south as far as Vermelles, and beyond the Vermelles—Hulluch road; and those on Hill 70 covered most of the ground in the British sector south of this road. The British troops in the front trenches were subjected to constant shelling, and it was found impracticable to place guns for cutting the wire of the enemy's second position south of Hulluch without having them "spotted" and knocked out. In consequence, on the 2nd October, Sir John French was compelled to inform General Foch that the preliminaries for the operations against Fosse 8 and the Quarries could not be completed

until the 5th, and the main attack therefore could not take place until the 6th. To this further postponement the French agreed.

LOCAL OPERATIONS TO RECOVER THE DUMP. LOSS OF THE HOHENZOLLERN REDOUBT

Pending the general attack, local operations on the part of the British to recover the Dump and Fosse 8 by trench warfare methods were undertaken, with heavy casualties on both sides. On the 28th September at 9.30 A.M. the 85th Brigade of the 28th Division (Major-General E. S. Bulfin) under Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Roberts of the 3/Royal Fusiliers, had attempted to carry out the attack ordered for 2.30 A.M.¹ A desperate struggle to advance lasting all day was made by the 2/Buffs (Lieut.-Colonel C. A. Worthington) and the 3/Middlesex (Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Neale), supported by the 2/East Surrey (Lieut.-Colonel F. S. Montague-Bates), and the 3/Royal Fusiliers (Major E. M. Baker), and two battalions of the 83rd Brigade (Br.-General H. S. L. Ravenshaw), the 1/K.O.Y.L.I. (Lieut.-Colonel C. R. I. Brooke) and the 1/York and Lancaster (Lieut.-Colonel G. E. Bayley), but the machine-gun power and the hand-grenade supremacy of the enemy were too great. Lieut.-Colonels Worthington and Neale and many others were killed. At night when Br.-General B. C. M. Carter took over command of the 85th Brigade, the British front line was still in the Hohenzollern, and the enemy had footings in both Big and Little Willie.

Incessant fighting, recalling that at Hill 60 in the spring, continued round the Hohenzollern all through the 29th, the enemy making many bombing attacks. But, in spite of lack of means to reply and the shelling, which made the trenches unrecognizable, the 85th Brigade held on.² The 30th September was quieter, and at the close of the day the 84th Brigade (Br.-General T. H. F. Pearse) relieved the 85th: the 83rd Brigade had taken the place of the 22nd (7th Division) opposite the Quarries twenty-four hours earlier. That night, however, the Germans from Cité St. Elie took action again and, partly by attack over the open and partly

¹ See page 353.

² 2/Lieut. A. J. T. Fleming-Sandes, 2/East Surrey Regiment and Private S. Harvey, 1/York and Lancaster, received the V.C. for most conspicuous bravery on this day. The former bombed the enemy from the top of the parapet in full view, during a critical situation, being twice severely wounded; the latter brought up no less than thirty boxes of bombs across the open under fire.

1 Oct. by bombing, captured two hundred and fifty yards of Gun Trench north of the Vermelles—Hulluch road from the 7th Division. They remained in possession in spite of efforts made to dislodge them, mainly by the 5th Brigade (Br.-General C. E. Corkran), of the 2nd Division which relieved the 7th Division on the night of the 1st/2nd October.

The 1st and 2nd October saw the renewal of close fighting at the Hohenzollern, and the eastern part of it and most of Little Willie were lost. Finally, in the early hours of the 3rd October, when the 83rd Brigade was on the way to relieve the 84th, the Germans made a strong attack from both sides of the Dump, and recaptured the rest of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, but not Big Willie.¹

Sketch
39. The loss of this important work threatened the position in the salient opposite the Quarries, and General Haig decided, with the approval of Sir J. French, to postpone the execution of his other plans, and concentrate on the recapture of the Hohenzollern and Fosse 8. With this object in view, the First Army front was reorganized. The IV. Corps on the right retained the Vermelles—Hulluch road as its left boundary, but the XI. Corps was interpolated between it and the I. and took over the right sector of the I. Corps front from the IV. Corps left up to the Vermelles—Auchy road, opposite Fosse 8. This left to the I. Corps the narrow frontage from that road to the La Bassée canal.

These changes became effective on the night of 4th/5th October, and arrangements for the assault on Fosse 8 and the Quarries were therefore made by the XI. Corps. It was to be supported by all available artillery of the First Army, and assisted by gas and smoke. The 12th Division was to attack the Quarries, and the Guards Division, which had been brought into the line again, was to recapture the Hohenzollern and Fosse 8. The construction of more assembly and starting trenches, and the preparations for the installation of the gas cylinders, 120 on the front of each assaulting brigade, had to be carried out entirely at night, owing to the continual fire of the enemy's batteries and trench mortars. As on the former occasion, the 25th September, when gas was used this latter work proved very

¹ In this attack the *Composite Bavarian Regiment (Staubwasser)* was reinforced by a battalion of the *57th Regiment* from the north of the La Bassée canal and a battalion of the *104th Regiment* from the *XIX. Corps* reserve at Quesnoy (5 miles N.N.W. of Lille), sent south on the 28th September. The losses of the 28th Division during the fighting round the Hohenzollern Redoubt amounted to 146 officers and 3,231 other ranks.

difficult to perform and consumed considerable time ; so 5 Oct. the attack was postponed till the 9th October. As a preliminary, the 12th Division was on the evening of the 8th to recapture the lost sector of Gun Trench.

These delays caused grave anxiety to General Joffre, who desired to renew the attacks in Artois and in Champagne on the same date as the British. He was somewhat reassured by General Foch, who was convinced that, in consequence of the French and British preparations and activity, the enemy could not withdraw any troops from the north to send to Champagne. Intelligence reports showed that whereas on the 25th September there were 108 German batteries on the front of the French Tenth and British First Armies, there were on the 5th October, 153. On receipt of Sir John French's message of the 5th—when the bombardment in Champagne had already begun—that his attack must be postponed from the 6th to the 9th (the 10th was first mentioned) General Joffre "resigned himself to the inevitable" and wrote to the British Commander-in-Chief that he regretted the delay, but realized the causes that imposed it.¹

Bad weather had greatly interfered with the French preparations in Artois, and on the 5th General d'Urbal reported that owing to the state of the ground any forward movement would be impossible for several days. Then suddenly, on the night of the 5th/6th, he learnt that the divisions of the III. Corps were so worn out after their losses and the hardships caused by bad weather, that it was necessary to relieve them, an operation that could not be completed before the 8th and 9th for the infantry, and the 11th for the artillery. He began to carry out the relief without informing General Foch, and, as a result, the general attack of the French Tenth Army was postponed until the 10th October.

Meanwhile, as might have been expected, the enemy had not been idle, and on the afternoon of the 8th October, he launched his counter-move, and attacked between Loos Double Crassier and the La Bassée canal. Of this offensive the Allies had no warning. The Royal Flying Corps had reported a certain amount of train movements during the preceding week ; but no sign of extra traffic on the roads

¹ The renewed French assault in Champagne took place on the 6th October after five days' preparation, which practically exhausted the French gun ammunition. The centre of the Second Army captured the village of Tahure, but its right and left and the Fourth Army suffered "an almost total check". French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 498.

8 Oct. had been detected. The weather severely restricted air work during this period, and only to a certain extent had it been possible to follow out the policy of bombing the railway lines leading to the battle area.

8TH OCTOBER : THE GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK

Sketch The German attack to recover Loos and the Lone Tree
39. position, intended to be delivered by the *Guard Corps* on the 27th September, had been delayed owing to the throwing of the divisions of this formation piecemeal into the battle line opposite the French Tenth Army on Vimy ridge.¹ It was not until the 6th October that sufficient troops could be spared and assembled north of Lens to re-capture the positions lost to the British on the 25th September. The attack was ordered to take place on the afternoon of the 8th, and early on the morning of that day the French on Hill 70 reported that the Germans had cut passages through the wire in that sector, and that an attack appeared imminent. At noon the enemy bombarded the whole front from the La Bassée canal southwards to opposite Lens, the artillery fire gradually increasing and reaching its greatest intensity between 3 and 4 P.M. At the latter hour the Germans carried out an assault against the sector Double Crassier—Hill 70—Chalk Pit Wood, their intention being to occupy Loos village and the neighbouring trenches as a preliminary to regaining their original line.

The left and centre of this assault, carried out by approximately twelve battalions of the *7th* and *8th Divisions*, on either side of the Lens—Béthune road, was met successfully by the French IX. Corps, and resulted in the gain of only a small length of trench.² The right of the assault, carried out by the battalions of the *153rd* and *216th Regiments*, came up against the British 1st Division holding from the Loos—Puits 14 bis track to the north of the Chalk Pit, where the 2/Royal Munster Fusiliers (Major A. Gorham) was on the right, the 1/Gloucestershire (Lieut.-Colonel A. W. Pagan) in the centre and the 1/9th King's (Lieut.-Colonel F. Ramsay) on the left. Here

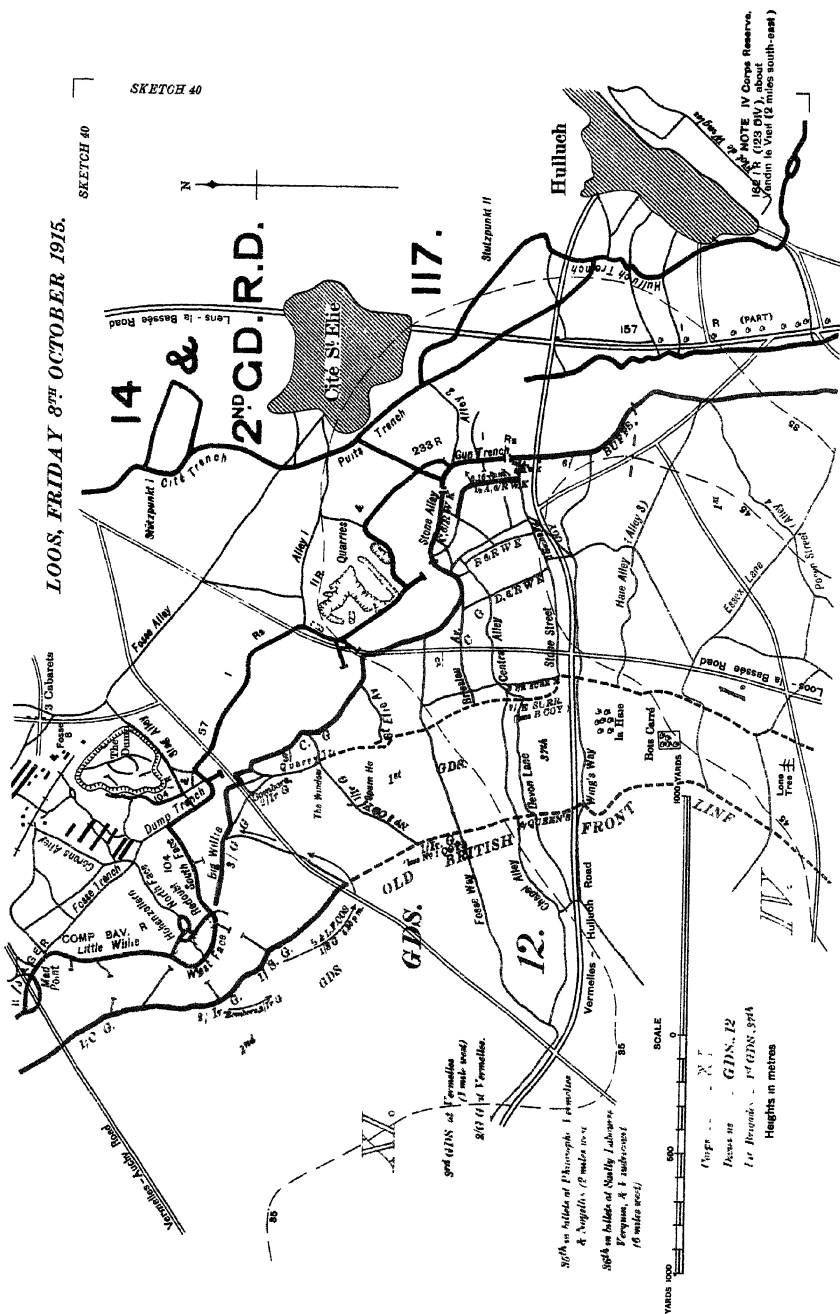
¹ See Note at end of Chapter for some details of the German operations.

² The Germans ascribe their failure to the fact that their artillery had not destroyed the French wire entanglement, which they reached but were unable to get through. They suffered heavy losses, and their only success was a gain of four hundred yards of trench between the Double Crassier and the Béthune—Lens road.

LOOS, FRIDAY 8TH OCTOBER 1915.

SKETCH 40

SKETCH 40



Ordinance Survey, 1905

the intense artillery fire had caused heavy losses in both front and support lines. The chief attack was made against the trenches of the Gloucestershire—in front of Chalk Pit Wood—and of the King's, the enemy advancing from Bois Hugo and the trenches north of it. His massed formation was met by rifle and machine-gun fire from both battalions, and checked within forty yards of their line.¹ Other Germans in extended lines advanced from Puits 14 bis, but were stopped almost at once by fire from the Munsters, and the survivors of the attack had further heavy casualties in retiring to their starting trenches. The line here therefore remained unchanged.

Subsidiary to the offensive on Loos, enemy bombing attacks were delivered from the direction of the Quarries and Fosse 8 against that part of the original German line, Quarry Trench and Big Willie, still held by the British, but the Germans found their opponents better prepared to meet them than had hitherto been the case, as some nine thousand Mills hand-grenades had been issued to the Guards Division. The attacks began, like the main one, at 4 P.M., after a four-hour bombardment. Parties of the *117th Division* attempted to bomb westwards from the Quarries along St. Elie Avenue communication trench into the southern end of Quarry Trench, but were repulsed by the 2/Coldstream Guards at the sap head, though it had been previously flattened out by shell fire. Simultaneously, an effort was made by parties of the *2nd Guard Reserve* and *14th Divisions* from the Hohenzollern Redoubt, to co-operate by bombing southwards down Big Willie into the northern end of Quarry Trench, and had a temporary success. The line of the 3/Grenadier Guards along Big Willie pointed like a finger up to the Hohenzollern Redoubt, with enemy saps round both its flanks for the last hundred yards. Bombers of the German *57th* and *104th Regiments* rushed this end of the trench from three sides, killed the garrison and forced the remainder of the 3/Grenadier Guards southwards along the trench before any resistance could be organized.² On reaching the junc-

¹ The 1/Gloucestershire and 1/9th King's received the special thanks of the commanders of the 1st Division, I. Corps and First Army.

² The method adopted by the Germans in their bombing attacks at this period was as follows :—After artillery preparation, the bomb attack moved along the communication trenches towards the British line. The bombing party was arranged as follows : Two to four bayonet men in front, followed by three bombers, one to throw, the second to prepare the bomb for No. 1, and the third to keep handing up fresh bombs to No. 2, the three men being trained to interchange their positions as they got tired or

8 Oct. tion with Dump Trench the 3/Coldstream Guards barred the way; the battalion was for a moment hard pressed, and lost an advanced sap. The enemy, however, was quickly bombed out by an attack of two companies of the 1/Scots Guards, and then a party of the 3/Coldstream Guards, under Lance-Sergeant O. Brooks,¹ set about bombing up the lost trench. By fierce fighting, this party, followed by a company of the 3/Grenadier and two companies of the 1/Scots Guards, worked up Big Willie driving the German bombing parties before it. Almost simultaneously bombers of the Irish Guards, sent forward by Br.-General Feilding on appeal by telephone from Br.-General Ponsonby, entered Big Willie by a communication trench, took the Germans in flank and quickly threw them into confusion. Meanwhile, the 1/Irish Guards, seeing the success of the bombers of the 3/Coldstream Guards, whom it had kept well supplied with bombs, advanced quickly from the trench it was holding and, in conjunction with the Grenadier and Coldstream Guards, recaptured Big Willie, which was handed back to the 3/Grenadier Guards. Bombing continued for some time, and finally the Germans made an attack over the open towards the Guards trenches, only to be shot down by machine-gun fire.²

casualties occurred. The three bombers were followed by thirty bomb carriers, who kept passing the bombs along from the rear and acted as reserves. The attack was protected by covering fire from machine guns directed along the flanks of the communication trenches. The bayonet men in front were to deal with a rush down the trench. The bombers received an ample supply of bombs from the carriers and were themselves relieved by men drawn from the carriers as necessity arose. If attacked with bombs, the German bombing party withdrew until the enemy supply of bombs was exhausted: they then immediately pressed forward again.

The British method that was gradually evolved was very similar to this, with the exception that two men with Lewis guns generally followed the bombers.

¹ He was awarded the V.C.

² The history of the *57th Regiment* says of this attack:—"About 4.30 P.M. the barricades of the saps were broken down and the attack began. At the head of each of the two columns that were to storm along the saps was a strong party of bombers, followed by men carrying filled sandbags ready to make a barricade at once whenever necessary. Behind there was a detachment with rifles and hand-grenades who were to search and clear any enemy dug-outs and defend the barricades. At the tail of the columns were reserve bombers for replacing casualties in the front bombing party. At first the attack in the western sap went well, but was checked by the explosion of a mine which killed and wounded a number of the bombing party in front. A heavy and effective machine-gun fire from a gun in the sap beyond the mine, and fire from a trench mortar compelled this column to withdraw step by step with the enemy in pursuit, back to its sortie position. The attack along the eastern sap

Towards dusk a mass of Germans¹ moving across the 8 Oct. open in close formation from Fosse Alley came, as they passed south of Fosse 8, under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire from the 3/Coldstream Guards in Quarry Trench, especially from a machine-gun that enfiladed them, and were forced to retire with heavy loss.

By nightfall the enemy counter-offensive had collapsed, though fighting continued near Gun Trench. Here, at 6.15 P.M., according to a plan arranged prior to the German attack,² the 37th Brigade (Br.-General C. A. Fowler), the right of the 12th Division, made a frontal advance from the support trench on the crest against the two hundred and fifty yards of Gun Trench north of the Vermelles—Hulluch road still in German hands. Bombing attacks were made simultaneously against the flanks of the sector from north and south, that is from Stone Alley and from the southern part of Gun Trench. The attack across the two hundred yards of open ground carried out by the 6/R. West Kent (Lieut.-Colonel E. F. Venables) gained a footing in the trench, in spite of the fire of four machine guns there, the assaulting companies losing 5 officers and 103 other ranks; but a shortage of bombs eventually compelled a withdrawal. The bombing attacks from the flanks failed owing to meeting German reinforcements that came up both along the Cité St. Elie communication trench (Alley 2), and from the Quarries along a newly dug and previously unnoticed trench, an extension of Gun Trench. The fighting died down soon after dark, and the situation in Gun Trench remained unaltered.

NOTE³THE GERMAN REINFORCEMENTS AND RELIEFS
26TH SEPTEMBER-8TH OCTOBER

The *Guard Corps*, "not recovered from its severe cutting up in "the Russian offensive", and "weak with insufficiently trained reinforcements and an insufficient number of them" ("Guard "Foot Regt. No. 4", p. 151), had been detained, on arrival from

"was held up by the same explosion, and the enemy, counter-attacking "shortly afterwards, forced back this column also with heavy losses to its "sortie position. The attack by the *117th Division*, further south, with "which it had been intended to join hands, likewise had no success."

¹ Companies of the *77th Reserve Regiment* with orders to complete the capture of Quarry Trench.

² See page 371.

³ From regimental histories and from information kindly supplied by the *Reichsarchiv*.

Sept. Russia, near Brussels on the 18th-19th September, but had been alarmed and railed up towards the British front at midnight of the 25th/26th.

Sketch 37. It was detrained, the *1st Guard Division* at Douai and the *2nd Guard Division* at Seclin. Of the latter, two infantry regiments and one field artillery regiment were at once allotted to the *IV. Corps*. These moved, using motor lorries, as follows: the *2nd Guard Grenadier Regiment* to Lens, the *3rd Guard Grenadier Regiment* to Meurchin (3½ miles east by north of Hulluch) and the *4th Guard Field Artillery Regiment* to Libercourt (8½ miles east of Hulluch). On this day also several heavy batteries from the *Sixth Army* reserve were moved into position between Lens and the La Bassée canal, viz.:—three mortar batteries, four heavy field howitzer batteries, one 10-cm. and one heavy 15-cm. battery.

The *1st Guard Division* was sent on the 27th towards Lens and then on to the Vimy front, the first battalions of the *1st Brigade* that arrived being hastily formed into temporary regiments, "*Kuhl-wein*" and "*Schultzendorff*", whilst the *4th Foot Guard Regiment* was "scattered to all the winds".

How hard put to it was the enemy is shown by the small number and variety of the reinforcements, except from the Guard Corps, which could be made available.

On the 27th, the German battle line was reorganized. The *7th Division*, in front of Lens, extended its right, about Cité St. Pierre, to the Lens—Béthune road (exclusive). The *8th Division* took over from that road to *Stützpunkt IV.* in the second position, including the advanced trenches on Hill 70 and at Bois Hugo. The *117th Division*, greatly reduced in numbers as it had borne almost the entire weight of the British assault on the 25th, was now only responsible for the front from *Stützpunkt IV.* to the Quarries (inclusive). From here northwards to the La Bassée canal the line continued to be held by the *14th Division*, supported by the *26th Reserve Brigade (2nd Guard Reserve Division)* that had come up on the evening of the 25th, the *Composite Bavarian Regiment (Staubwasser)* and a battalion of the *104th Regiment* that arrived from the *XIX. Corps* reserve on the 28th.

On the 27th one battalion of the *3rd Guard Grenadier Regiment* from Meurchin was sent forward to Hulluch to strengthen the *117th Division*, and the *4th Guard Field Artillery Regiment* came up from Libercourt. The other two *3rd Guard Grenadier* battalions were moved forward to Wingles in support.

On the 28th the front of the *117th Division* was further strengthened by three light field howitzer batteries of the *2nd Guard Field Artillery Regiment*.

On the night of the 28th/29th, the *2nd Guard Division* was moved from the Hulluch area and sent in to relieve the *123rd Division* north of Souchez. Those units of it already allotted to the *117th Division* were replaced by units of the *123rd Division*. The *182nd Regiment* of the latter was moved to Vendin to the *IV. Corps* reserve. The *1st Guard Division* had already gone into the battle line against the French north of Arras.

On the 30th September the *XI. Corps*, from the Russian theatre of war, began to arrive behind the front of the *Sixth Army*.

On the 2nd October one of the three battalions of the *II. Bavarian Corps* put into the fight on the 25th-26th September (see Note on

German Reinforcements 25th September at end of Chapter XVI.) Oct. was replaced by a battalion of the *6th Bavarian Reserve Division*. In this sector (Fosse 8) a battalion of the *57th Regiment* from the north of the La Bassée canal, and the battalion of the *104th* were also put in on this day, for the attack against the Hohenzollern Redoubt on the 3rd October.

On the 3rd October the *216th* and *233rd Reserve Regiments* from the *Fourth Army* were allotted to the *IV. Corps*, the former being given to the *8th Division* on the Hill 70 front, and the latter to the *117th Division* about Hulluch.

Preparations for the German counter-offensive had been begun at the end of September, but owing to the employment of the *Guard Corps* to reinforce the troops opposite the French about Souchez and Farbus it was postponed, the final orders for it being issued on the 6th October. The main attack was to be delivered by the *IV. Corps* with its *7th* and *8th Divisions*. The Lens—Béthune road was to be the dividing line between the two divisions during the advance and Loos village was to be reached in the first rush. Battalions of the following regiments were engaged :—the *27th (7th Division)*; *72nd*, *93rd*, *153rd (8th Division)* and, in addition, the *106th Reserve Regiment (123rd Division)* and *216th Reserve Regiment (8th Division)*. The attack frontage extended from the Double Crassier on the German left to Puits 14 bis and the adjacent woods on the right.

As a subsidiary operation, and to hold the enemy whilst the main attack was in progress, the *117th Division* was to carry out a bombing operation from the Quarries along communication trenches and gain ground in the old German line (Quarry Trench). The *14th Division* was to co-operate in this undertaking by bombing southwards from Fosse 8 and the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BATTLE OF LOOS (*continued*)

9TH-18TH OCTOBER

THE RENEWED BRITISH ATTACK AGAINST THE QUARRIES AND THE HOHENZOLLERN REDOUBT¹

(Map 11 ; Sketches 40, 41)

Map 11.
Sketch
41.

THE preparations for the attacks against the Quarries and against the Hohenzollern Redoubt and Fosse 8 on the 10th October were upset and delayed by the bombardment preceding the German attack on the 8th October; but they were at once resumed. The installation of the gas cylinders was carried out on the three following nights, and the date of the attack fixed for the 18th. General Foch, on being informed of this change, decided that the Tenth Army should attack the crest of Vimy ridge, a most useful preliminary, without waiting for the British, and that the simultaneous and combined operation of the two Armies should be carried out later. The IX. Corps, next to the British, was not to attack Hill 70, but only to recover the piece of trench near the Double Crassier lost on the 8th. The results of the French offensive, carried out on the 11th October with the loss of 2,200 men, were mediocre.² The Germans were in force, and ready. Only a trifling gain of ground was made at one part, owing

¹ According to the Official Battles Nomenclature, the Battle of Loos ends on the 8th October, and the fighting that is described in this chapter and the next is given the name of the "Actions of the Hohenzollern Redoubt". There seems no good reason for this change of name, and it is not adopted here.

² The troops of the IX. Corps were stopped on the German wire by machine-gun fire, and failed even to enter the lost trench. One division of the XXI. Corps gained "un peu de terrain"; the XXXIII. Corps, after a slight advance, was forced to retire to its trenches; the XII. Corps did little better; and the III. and XVII. Corps did not attack.

Loos **LOOS, WEDNESDAY 13TH OCTOBER 1915.**

[illegible]

YARDS 1000 0 1000 2000 YARDS

SCALE

CORPS *L*

Division *I, 46.*

Inf Brig. *1st, 3rd, 136th*

(Right) for 1st & 2nd

Positions taken & held at night

Heights in meters

according to General Foch, to indifferent artillery preparation. He decided, nevertheless, to renew the attack at the earliest possible date, as the Tenth Army was "within a bound" of the crest of Vimy ridge, and in its present position was entirely dominated by the enemy, so that it could not, without continual losses, remain there during the winter. General Joffre, however, was of another opinion. The state of the artillery ammunition supply, particularly for the heavy guns, compelled the cessation of any further considerable operations both in Artois and in Champagne. He gave orders that action should be limited to the IX. Corps assisting the British by an artillery demonstration, as previously arranged. The French Tenth Army, therefore, made no further attack, and the battle so far as it was concerned came to a close on the 11th October, although General d'Urbal's instructions to his troops to consolidate the ground won, and to create a strong defensive organization in view of a future resumption of the offensive, were not issued until the 15th. 11 Oct.

During the interval preceding the British attack of the 13th October, a successful attempt was made to improve the situation in Big Willie. The 2/Grenadier Guards held the old German trench system in Big Willie for a short distance beyond the road which passes south of the Dump, the left of its front line resting on a block in the trench, on the other side of which were the Germans. The enemy, by occupying a short length of communication trench and a portion of fire trench running southwards from it held a kind of pocket in the Guards' line, known as "The Loop",¹ and was able to take part of the Guards' front line in reverse and enfilade other portions of the trenches, causing considerable and continual annoyance. The 2/Grenadier Guards, after a bombing attack on the night of the 10th October, and severe hand-to-hand fighting in which sixty men were lost, captured the Loop and a length of trench beyond it, and held them against a determined counter-attack at dawn on the 11th. On the afternoon of the 12th, after two hours' shelling of the whole battalion sector, the Germans made a heavy bombing attack, but were again repulsed, the Grenadiers having 81 casualties. The shelling and trench-mortar fire, however, continued to be so heavy that the relief of the battalion by the 7/Suffolk (12th Division) and 1/5th South Staffordshire (46th Division) 40.

¹ See Map 11 and Sketch 41. The Loop is at the point where Big Willie crosses the road which passes south of the Dump.

13 Oct. which should have been begun at 6.45 P.M., was postponed until midnight, when the shelling moderated.¹

THE ATTACK OF THE 13TH OCTOBER ²

Map 11.
Sketch
41.

On the 13th, a perfect, bright autumn day, the attack of the First Army was begun at noon by a bombardment, carried out by fifty-four heavy howitzers, eighty-six field howitzers, 286 field guns and nineteen counter-batteries, and continued for two hours. The French IX. Corps made its demonstration at the same time by shelling the German positions on Hill 70 and near Bois Hugo. The XI. Corps was to recover both the Quarries and Fosse 8. Simultaneously the IV. Corps was to secure and consolidate the line of the Lens—La Bassée road between Chalk Pit Wood and the Vermelles—Hulluch road. It would thereby straighten its front in order to facilitate the preparation of a further offensive against the German second position at and south of Hulluch. Arrangements had been made both for the discharge of gas and the formation of smoke, commencing at 1 P.M. on three sectors: on the 1st Division front south-west of Hulluch; on the 46th Division front between the Hohenzollern Redoubt and the Vermelles—Auchy road (through Mad Point); and in the 2nd Division area between the road and the canal. The gas was to be stopped at 1.50 P.M., ten minutes before zero hour, and the smoke continued up to that hour.³

If the weather conditions proved unfavourable, the

¹ The front after the various divisional reliefs is shown on Sketch 41.

For a series of brave and devoted actions under heavy bombardment and gas shelling on the 11th and 12th October, Acting-Sergeant J. C. Raynes, A Battery, LXXI. Brigade Royal Field Artillery, was awarded the V.C.

² On the 18th October Great Britain severed diplomatic relations with Bulgaria, declaring war on the 15th.

Information was received on the 13th October that at dawn on the 12th, Miss Edith Cavell, the head of a training school for nurses in Brussels, had been executed by the German authorities, after trial, on the charge that she had harboured fugitive British and French soldiers, and Belgian civilians of military age, and had assisted them to escape from Belgium.

³ The total number of cylinders brought up was 3,170, of which only 1,100 were discharged. There were ten in each emplacement, in most cases a T head in front of the fire trench. The first four cylinders were discharged two at a time in order to catch the Germans with a strong concentration of gas when they were adjusting their respirators, and the last four when their oxygen apparatus was exhausted; the remaining two cylinders were opened at equal intermediate periods.

assault was to be postponed, but on the 13th October there 13 Oct. was a south-west wind of about five miles an hour. This was ideal, except in the sector near the canal—where only a few cylinders here and there were discharged—and orders were given to carry on with the attack.

But the gas did not provide even the limited assistance which it had given on the 25th September; in fact it chiefly served to give the enemy warning that an infantry assault was imminent.

On the IV. Corps front, the 1st Division was to capture the new German trench along the Lens road from the junction of the Loos—Hulluch and Lens—La Bassée roads northwards to opposite Hulluch, a length of fourteen hundred yards. It was then to consolidate and connect this trench with the existing one that led south to the Chalk Pit. The 1st Brigade (Br.-General A. J. Reddie) was entrusted with this task, with the 2nd Brigade (Br.-General H. F. Thuillier) in support in the old German trenches. The 3rd Brigade (Br.-General H. R. Davies), on the right of the 1st, was not to advance, but would remain holding the line through Chalk Pit Wood to the Loos—Puits 14 bis track. The five battalions¹ of the 1st Brigade advanced in line to the assault. They had to cover three hundred yards of open ground before reaching the German position along the Lens road, strong bombing parties preceding them up the trenches leading forward. The discharge of the gas, from only 310 cylinders, promised to be most successful; for, although its appearance was greeted by heavy enemy fire, this gradually died down. Moving under cover of the smoke, until within fifty yards of the German line, when the smoke began to clear, the 1st Brigade at first encountered little resistance; then fire was opened on its front and both its flanks, and became more and more intense as the German wire was approached. Even so, it was not enough to stop the battalions, but unfortunately the attempt of the artillery to cut passages through the entanglement had been successful only in a few places, owing principally to the long range.² Although gallant efforts were made to force a way through with wire-cutters it was found impracticable in face of the heavy fire. The bombers soon exhausted their supply of grenades,

¹ The London Scottish, 8/Royal Berkshire, 1/Black Watch, 10/Gloucestershire and 1/Cameron's.

² Subsequent observation showed that only four gaps, averaging fifteen yards across, had been cut.

13 Oct. and suffered heavy casualties when the enemy bombers counter-attacked, only the bravery of a few individuals keeping them off. Thus, both above ground and in the trenches the attacks came to an end. Conflicting messages, however, were received as to the success of the assault, and supports were accordingly sent forward to assist; but, as the smoke had cleared, and the enemy had recovered from the first effects of the gas, these suffered severely, and were unable to get up to the entanglement. The troops of the 1st Brigade, who had taken cover in the long rank grass of No Man's Land after their failure, were withdrawn to their starting trenches under cover of darkness. During the night of the 13th/14th October the 2nd Brigade was ordered to move up and, passing through the 1st Brigade, make a further effort before daylight. The night being exceptionally dark, it was not possible to reach the front trenches and organize the attack in time, and it had to be cancelled. The day's fighting cost the 1st Division twelve hundred casualties.

On the front of the XI. Corps, the attack on the Quarries was delivered by two brigades of the 12th Division (Major-General A. B. Scott). On the right, the 37th Brigade (Br.-General C. A. Fowler)—leaving the 6/Queen's (Lieut.-Colonel H. F. Warden), its right battalion, in the line in Gun Trench south of the Hulluch road—was to make another effort to retake the lost sector of Gun Trench north of the road, and also to establish itself in the eastern-most corner of the Quarries. On the left the 35th Brigade (Br.-General C. H. C. van Straubenzee) was to overrun the Quarries, and consolidate a front from their eastern corner northwards to Fosse Alley, gaining touch there with the 46th Division, attacking on its left. Here no gas had been installed, but smoke candles and smoke grenades were available and were used. With this assistance, which was more effective on the 37th than on the 35th Brigade front, the right of the 37th Brigade—the 7/East Surrey (Lieut.-Colonel R. H. Baldwin), supported by the 6/Royal West Kent (Lieut.-Colonel E. F. Venables)—with only one hundred and fifty yards of No Man's Land to cross, was able to rush the two hundred and fifty yards of Gun Trench that had given so much trouble, capturing sixteen prisoners. The East Surreys, though heavily counter-attacked with bombs, managed to fill in fifty yards of the communication trench leading to Cité St. Elie so as to block it. The left of the 37th Brigade, the

6/Buffs (Lieut.-Colonel W. A. Eaton) had further to go, 13 Oct. and, moving across the open south of the Quarries, came under violent machine-gun fire from the Gun Trench extension to the Quarries. Owing to the difficulty of accurate observation on this new trench, the presence of which was only known by reports from the front line, it had not been touched by the previous bombardment. The Buffs in a few minutes lost nine officers and four hundred other ranks, and were forced to stop when hardly more than a hundred yards from their starting trenches.

The attack by the 35th Brigade against the Quarries, also across open ground, was made with the 7/Norfolk (Lieut.-Colonel F. E. Walter) on the right and 7/Suffolk (Lieut.-Colonel C. D. P. Crooke) on the left leading, followed by the 5/Royal Berkshire (Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Foley) and 9/Essex (Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Lewes). The volume of smoke proved inadequate to screen the operations from the Dump, as planned, and, in addition to receiving heavy frontal fire, the brigade was enfiladed from Slag Alley and from a number of machine guns at the foot of the Dump, some of which took the 7/Suffolk in reverse. The Norfolk and R. Berkshire gained, mainly by bombing—many men being employed in passing up bombs—about 300 yards of trench at the south-western end of the Quarries; and the Suffolk secured, partly by bombing and partly by an attack of one company over the open, about two hundred and fifty yards of trenches, later known as "The Hairpin", at right angles to the British line along the north-west side of the Quarries. The gap between the Norfolk and Suffolk was subsequently reduced by the Essex. But into the Quarries the attack failed to penetrate, and the Germans still maintained possession of them. Thus by nightfall the 37th Brigade was holding Gun Trench and the southern part of Stone Alley, whilst the 35th Brigade had secured part of the south-western edge of the Quarries and the Hairpin. Four nights later on the 17th/18th October, this gain enabled the greater part of the south-western side of the Quarries to be occupied.

The attempt to recapture the Hohenzollern Redoubt and Fosse 8, and the Dump beyond it, was carried out by the 46th (North Midland) Division (Major-General the Hon. E. J. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley). This division, coming from the Ypres Salient, had begun to relieve the Guards Division on the previous night, the 12th/13th

13 Oct. October, in Big Willie and the British original front trenches behind that trench, but owing to the German counter-attack and the congestion in the communication trenches the relief was not completed until 6 A.M. None of the officers knew the ground, but endeavour had been made to give them some idea of the task, by sending practically every one of them, and some N.C.O.'s also, on a visit to the front trenches. Major-General Stuart-Wortley, after this examination of the ground, was of opinion that the best course was to proceed, as in siege warfare, by bombing attack and approaching the position trench by trench; but in this he was overruled, and the general plan of attack was similar to that of the 9th Division on the 25th September.

On the right the 187th Brigade (Br.-General E. Feetham) was to advance over the open across Big Willie (the right half of which was in British hands and held by 2 companies of the 1/5th South Staffordshire) and Dump Trench, pass south of the Dump and occupy Fosse Alley beyond it. On the left, the 188th Brigade (Br.-General G. C. Kemp) was to cross the Hohenzollern Redoubt and take up a line beyond the Corons north of the Dump. Thus the Dump was not to be attacked directly. On the 46th Division front the gas, though the wind was favourable, did not have the expected effect on the resistance—it settled down into the shell holes and the remains of trenches in the open, and very little of it reached the enemy. In fact, it merely gave them warning that an attack was about to be launched, and drew down an artillery barrage before the 46th Division could leave the trenches. The British bombardment, being of small volume, was not effective on the difficult targets offered, and the German portions of Big Willie and Little Willie were almost untouched. The attacking troops left their trenches five minutes before zero hour, and started with the greatest confidence, but immediately began to suffer heavy loss from terrific machine-gun and rifle fire. The great mass of this fire came from a number of machine guns in concealed shelters both near the foot of the Dump and in the south-west and south-east sides of the Corons, and also from parties of Germans who held out stubbornly in Little Willie and Dump Trench. Pushing on most gallantly, the left leading battalion of the 187th Brigade, 1/5th North Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Knight, killed during the action) lost twenty officers and 485 other ranks, mostly in the first rush towards Big Willie,

and was practically annihilated. The right, composed of 13 Oct. the headquarters half of the 1/5th South Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel R. R. Raymer), also lost so heavily that very few men reached the two companies of the battalion already in that trench; and when these companies attempted to go on, every officer and man who crossed the parapet became a casualty. The leading half battalions of the 1/6th South Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel F. W. B. Law) and 1/6th North Staffordshire (Lieut.-Colonel R. F. Ratcliff), and the 1/2nd North Midland (later No. 466) Field Company R.E. also pushed up to Big Willie suffering heavy casualties, but the remainder of the battalions was held back in the British front line.¹ Attempts were made by bombing westward along Big Willie to gain touch with the 138th Brigade, and a few yards of trench were secured; but otherwise the advance of the 137th Brigade ended where it had begun.

The attack of the 138th Brigade was made with the 1/4th Leicestershire (Lieut.-Colonel R. E. Martin) and 1/5th Lincolnshire (Lieut.-Colonel T. E. Sandall) leading, followed by the 1/4th Lincolnshire (Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Heathcote) and 1/1st Monmouthshire (Lieut.-Colonel C. A. Evill), the divisional Pioneer battalion, and the 1/1st North Midland (later No. 465) Field Company R.E. The 1/5th Leicestershire (Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Jones) was in divisional reserve. Having a shorter distance to go than the 137th Brigade, sheltered by the Hohenzollern from machine guns, and starting five minutes later, at 2.5 P.M., by divisional order so that its flank should be covered, it reached the Hohenzollern with less loss. But in passing towards Fosse Trench, heavy toll was taken of it by the machine guns in the Corons and Mad Point; nevertheless, Fosse Trench was reached and small detachments are reported to have gone beyond it and entered the buildings of the Corons. This success, however, could not be maintained, owing to the fact that the whole length of Fosse Trench was enfiladed from the Dump and Mad Point, and on account of the very heavy losses that had been incurred, especially in officers, among the wounded being the lieutenant-

¹ XI. Corps report stated that parties reached Dump Trench and the Dump, being driven off the latter by shrapnel fire, but there seems to be no real foundation for this. Lieut.-Colonel Law (1/6th South Staffordshire) reported that about 3 P.M. he observed signalling from the Dump for more bombs and S.A.A., and later for reinforcements. At the time he took the signals to come from the advanced bombing line, although he could not convince himself that it had got so far.

13 Oct. colonels of the 1/4th Leicestershire, 1/4th Lincolnshire and 1/5th Lincolnshire.

Any position beyond the Hohenzollern was clearly untenable, as both flanks were exposed, and the attack, although reinforced by two companies of the 1/5th Leicestershire,¹ came to a stop. Fighting and bombing continued, and isolated parties remained in Fosse Trench and shell holes until dark, but gradually the units, after further severe casualties among the officers, drifted back to the Hohenzollern Redoubt, which had meantime been taken over by the 1/1st Monmouthshire.

The 139th Brigade (Br.-General C. T. Shipley), in reserve, had been moved up towards the front line of trenches as the other brigades went forward taking with them over two hundred of its bombers. At 2.45 P.M., on the request of Br.-General Kemp (138th Brigade), who had a call on the brigade for reinforcements, two companies of the 1/7th Sherwood Foresters were sent up to and reached the northern end of the Hohenzollern, but were unable to issue from it; and at 5 P.M. the 2/1st North Midland (later No. 468) Field Company R.E. was sent up with entrenching material. There was a considerable mixture of units in the redoubt, but Lieut.-Colonel Evill, who had taken charge, gradually evolved some sort of order. Movement over the open having proved impossible, the fighting developed into a contest in the trenches, and here the British were more than usually at a disadvantage; for there was such a shortage of bombs that the 46th Division on arrival had been served out with bags containing anything that looked like a bomb, old rifle grenades without sticks and old patterns without means of ignition. Parties of the 1/5th Leicestershire, which tried to bomb up North Face and Little Willie, had at first considerable success, but were driven back, leaving most of their bombers killed.

In the 2nd Division, north of the 46th, an attack by the bombers of the 5th Brigade, supported by detachments of the 1/Queen's, was made towards Little Willie, but it led to no result. The first party was annihilated by fire; of the second, one officer, Lieut. A. R. Abercrombie, and one man only reached Little Willie. Sending the soldier back with a request for reinforcements—a message which, being at once wounded, he could not deliver—Lieut. Abercrombie

¹ The remainder of the battalion was employed in carrying up bombs and assisting the engineers.

held on until dark, when he had expended all his bombs, 14 Oct. and then returned.¹ Owing to lack of bombs, no further attempts were made.

After darkness had set in, it was decided to evacuate the eastern face of the Hohenzollern Redoubt and dig a trench behind it, subsequently known as "The Chord", and this was carried out by the 1/1st Monmouthshire. The trenches also of the western face were reorganized for defence, and portions of the four Sherwood Foresters battalions of the 139th Brigade sent up to reinforce.

The enemy, discovering the new situation, recommenced bombardment and bombing, and made some progress; but at 4 A.M. on the 14th just as he was launching an attack across the open to reach the Hohenzollern, he was driven back at all points by the 1/7th Sherwood Foresters (Lieut.-Colonel A. W. Brewill) and the 1/8th Sherwood Foresters (Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Fowler, killed in the early morning of the 15th October), which had been ordered to clear the enemy away and had just completed their preparations. The 1/8th Sherwood Foresters then took over the redoubt and the 138th Brigade was withdrawn.²

The losses of the 46th Division amounted to no less than 180 officers and 3,583 other ranks, mostly incurred in the first ten minutes of the attacks, and it was long before the division recovered from the effects of the 13th October.³

¹ Lieut. Abercrombie, who died as a captain in 1918, was awarded the D.S.O., which, with the M.C., he won at the age of 19. "History of the Queen's Regiment", vii. p. 35.

² Two V.C.'s were awarded for conspicuous bravery in the Hohenzollern Redoubt:

On the 13th, to Corporal J. L. Dawson, 187th Company R.E., who walked up and down the parados, fully exposed to heavy fire, in order to be better able to give directions to his sappers and to clear the infantry out of sections of the trench that were filled with gas.

On the 14th, to Captain C. G. Vickers, 1/7th Sherwood Foresters, who successfully held a trench barrier for some hours against heavy bomb attacks, with only two men to hand him bombs. Regardless that his own retreat would be cut off, he ordered a second barrier to be built behind him to ensure the safety of the trench. He was severely wounded after the barrier had been completed.

³ 138th Brigade :				Officers.	Other Ranks.
4/Lincolnshire	.	.	.	10	387
5/	"	.	.	22	461
4/Leicestershire	.	.	.	20	453
5/	"	.	.	12	175
				64	1,476
137th Brigade :					
5/South Staffordshire	.	.	.	13	306
6/	"	.	.	18	389
5/North Staffordshire	.	.	.	20	485
6/	"	.	.	17	298
				68	1,478

14 Oct. The fighting on the 13th-14th October had not improved the general situation in any way and had brought nothing but useless slaughter of infantry: what the British won was lost again for lack of a sufficient supply of effective hand-grenades. On the right the French IX. Corps, which had not attacked, still held the western slope of Hill 70 facing the Germans in the redoubt. The British IV. Corps, in touch with the French left, had gained no ground and continued to hold the line of trenches west of the Lens road by Chalk Pit Wood to the Vermelles—Hulluch road. With the exception of the small gains about Gun Trench, the footing on the edge of the Quarries and the recapture of the western portion of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, the battle front of the XI. Corps remained unchanged. Nor had the I. Corps position from the Vermelles—Auchy road northwards to the La Bassée canal altered.

139th Brigade :	Officers.	Other Ranks.
5/Sherwood Foresters . . .	1	48
6/ " . . .	2	58
7/ " . . .	11	140
8/ " . . .	11	159
	25	405
Divisional Troops : . . .	10	77
Pioneers, 1/Monmouthshire . .	13	147
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	180	3,588
	<hr/>	<hr/>

CHAPTER XXII

THE END OF THE BATTLE OF LOOS

THE CLOSING OPERATIONS. THE BRITISH CASUALTIES AT LOOS AND IN 1915. RETROSPECT

(Sketch C)

CLOSING OPERATIONS

ON the 12th October, the eve of the operations for the recapture of Fosse 8 and the Quarries, just narrated, Sir John French had written to General Haig to the effect that his action subsequent to securing his left flank was to depend on the progress made by the French Tenth Army. This Army, he understood, was for the moment at a standstill, unable to get forward beyond Vimy ridge. In the circumstances, the First Army was not at present required to reach the objectives assigned to it in his orders of the 18th September, that is, the line of the Haute Deule canal and beyond.¹ The Army, nevertheless, was to continue its efforts to secure such localities as would enable it both to maintain its footing in the pocket that had been made in the enemy's line, and to be in readiness to make further progress when ordered. An offensive for any other purpose was not to be carried out until he, Sir John French, so directed.

On the 15th October, after he had heard that the French offensive had been brought to an end and that the British attack of the 13th had failed, he despatched another letter, in which he said that he did not now wish the operations of the First Army to be carried further than was necessary to secure its left flank against attack from the direction

¹ See page 138.

15 Oct. of Auchy and Haisnes. If the left flank could be secured without taking Fosse 8, the Dump and the Quarries, the First Army was not required to attack these places again. In reply, however, General Haig stated that he considered the possession of the dominating position of the Dump of Fosse 8 essential for the security of this sector of his line, and that, although the Quarries were of secondary importance, he had directed renewed preparations for the capture of Fosse 8, the Dump and the Quarries to be taken in hand. He intended to operate by a series of systematic bombing attacks designed to secure each of these objectives by stages, at the same time constructing parallels (jumping-off trenches) and approaches (communication trenches), as in siege warfare, with a view to getting as near as possible to his objectives, and capturing them by surprise assault over a narrow No Man's Land if the bombing operations were not successful. The attacks were to be assisted by discharges of gas and smoke wherever possible. Demonstrations to mislead the enemy were to be made on an extensive scale by the Indian Corps, north of the canal, as far north as Neuve Chapelle. He considered that two weeks must elapse before a line sufficiently near to the enemy could be reached, and the necessary trenches constructed for the final infantry assault.

On the 21st October, Sir John French sent a formal approval of these proposals; but in the meantime the results of a succession of bombing attacks about the Hohenzollern and Big Willie by the Guards Division had not been encouraging. Made with the idea of pushing steadily forward towards Dump Trench—which had been selected as the line for the last parallel, so that the assaulting infantry would be aligned immediately opposite the Dump—the continuous fighting of several days led to heavy losses and to no definite progress, only the local gain or loss of small sectors of trench. General Haig persevered, nevertheless, with his preparations, and fixed the 7th November as the provisional date for a general attack. But the heavy rains at the end of October, together with the constant enemy shelling, caused serious damage to the British trenches, delayed the preparations and greatly hampered the bombing operations. In view of the consequent necessity for further postponement and the approach of winter conditions, General Haig on the 4th November informed the Commander-in-Chief that he was compelled to abandon any hope of continuing the offensive. The

orders for further operations were cancelled and batteries 9 Nov. ordered to resume normal activity.

On the 9th November the corps frontages of the First Army were redistributed as follows:—

IV. Corps : From the French left (Loos—Puits 14 bis track) to Mud Trench (just north-west of the Hohenzollern Redoubt).

I. Corps : From Mud Trench to La Quinque Rue road (1½ miles south of Richebourg l'Avoué).

XI. Corps : From La Quinque Rue road to Picantin (just north of Fauquissart).

III. Corps : From Picantin to the right boundary of the Second Army on the Armentières—Lille road.

The situation on the front of the Third Army (X. and VII. Corps) from Curlu on the Somme to near Monchy au Bois (9 miles south-west of Arras) remained unchanged, with the French Tenth Army interposed between it and the First Army.

The Second Army, composed of the II., Canadian, V. and VI. Corps, still held the front as it was at the close of the Second Battle of Ypres, from Armentières to Boesinghe.

THE BRITISH CASUALTIES

The casualties of the Expeditionary Force in the battle of Loos were very heavy. From the 25th September to the 16th October, they amounted—exclusive of the subsidiary attacks—to 2,013 officers and 48,367 other ranks, of whom 292 officers and 6,698 other ranks fell or were missing in the attacks on and after the 13th October. Of the grand total some 800 officers and 15,000 men were killed, or missing and never heard of again. Such was the tremendous sacrifice made by all ranks to support fully and loyally our French Ally, and the price paid in flesh and blood for unpreparedness for war.

The German losses in the principal units on the Loos front during the two ten-day periods 21st-30th September and 1st-10th October (that is, excluding the heavy fighting on the 13th and following days) were 441 officers¹ and 19,395 other ranks, of whom less than 5,000

¹ Many individuals doing the duty of officers were not reckoned as belonging to the officer class, and were not included in the officer casualty list.

were killed. These figures do not count as dead the wounded who died in hospital or include the large number of slightly wounded treated in corps areas.¹

British casualties :

	Officers.				Other Ranks.			
	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing. ²		Killed.	Wounded.	Missing. ³	
Main Attack :								
IV. Corps :								
47th Div. .	82	48	2	82	485	1,057	256	1,748
15th Div. .	84	116	28	228	617	3,503	2,548	6,668
^a 1st Div. .	79	146	21	246	756	3,718	1,810	5,784
I. Corps :								
9th Div. .	63	100	27	190	798	3,037	2,033	5,868
7th Div. .	72	129	19	220	622	2,664	1,718	5,004
2nd Div. .	42	68	21	131	486	1,884	864	3,234
28th Div. .	38	90	18	146	416	1,750	1,065	3,231
XI. Corps :								
21st Div. .	33	128	37	198	219	2,271	1,368	3,853
24th Div. .	24	88	75	187	194	1,424	2,373	3,991
Guards Div. .	12	57	5	74	282	1,207	602	2,041
3rd Cav. Div. .	2	15	..	17	26	106	5	137
46th Div. .	64	97	19	180	416	1,893	1,274	3,583
12th Div. .	40	64	10	114	541	2,226	453	3,225
	585	1,146	282	2,013	5,758	26,740	15,869	48,367
Subsidiary Attack :								
Indian Corps :								
^a Meerut Div. .	30	68	39	137	309	1,926	778	3,013
^a Lahore Div. .	5	18	..	23	65	620	8	693
19th Div. .	15	18	..	33	107	409	123	639
III. Corps :								
8th Div. .	16	28	6	50	157	770	356	1,283
20th Div. .	6	13	..	19	77	311	154	542
V. Corps (Second Army) :								
^a 3rd Div. .	37	77	21	135	368	2,161	420	2,949
14th Div. .	18	29	9	56	213	1,127	421	1,761
	127	251	75	453	1,296	7,324	2,260	10,880
Grand totals				2,466				59,247

¹ See Note I. at end of Chapter for details. The total British captures were 53 officers, 3,100 men, 18 guns and 32 machine guns; those of the French in Artois, 50 officers and 2,100 men; and in Champagne, 330 officers and 18,963 men. The losses of the French Tenth Army in the period 25th September to 15th October were 1,250 officers and 46,980 other ranks, and of the French armies in Champagne, 25th September to 7th October, 3,743 officers and 139,824 other ranks.

The total German losses on the combined French and British fronts in Artois, according to the official lists, were 1,000 officers and 55,000 other ranks; and in Champagne, 1,700 officers and 83,300 other ranks: total, 141,000, of whom 30,300 were killed, 73,300 wounded and 37,400 missing.

² The prisoners claimed by the Germans on the whole Allied front in Artois amounted to only 106 officers and 3,642 other ranks.

³ The figures for these divisions are for the *whole month of September*.

The total losses due to battle in the British Expeditionary Force from the 1st January to the 31st December 1915, amounted to 12,009 officers and 273,098 other ranks, distributed as follows :—

	Officers.			Other Ranks.			Total.	
	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Officers.	O. R's.
First Army :								
1,584	3,827	516	19,491	89,567	25,521	5,927	134,579	
Second Army :								
1,223	3,779	345	19,700	86,373	20,814	5,347	126,887	
Third Army (11th July ¹ -31st December 1915) :								
74	322	6	1,326	5,851	129	402	7,306	
Cavalry Corps :								
70	223	10	606	2,748	463	303	3,317	
Indian Cavalry Corps :								
9	20	1	75	420	14	30	509	
2,960	8,171	878	41,198	184,959	46,941	12,009	273,098 ²	

Of the Second Army total, 2,150 officers and 57,125 other ranks were casualties in the Second Battle of Ypres and the fighting at Hill 60 (22nd April to 31st May), so that the cost of holding the Ypres Salient was proving disastrously heavy. The task of the Third Army was strictly that of holding the line in a quiet sector with French troops on each side of it.

RETROSPECT

The offensive of the 25th September was undertaken on the direct order of the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, in order to "do our utmost to help France in their offensive, even though by so doing we may suffer very heavy losses".³ Sir John French had previously decided and informed Generals Joffre and Foch that, with the limited forces and material at his disposal, he was in a position to support them with little more than artillery, and would not launch a large force of infantry "to the attack of objectives which are so strongly held as to be liable to result in the sacrifice of many lives".⁴ In this conception of the situation he had been overruled. General Haig, whose First Army was to carry out the operation,

¹ Date of formation.

² The total losses in 1914, see "1914" Vol. II. p. 467, had been 3,627 officers and 86,237 other ranks.

³ See page 129.

⁴ See page 125.

had expressed himself in even more definite and uncompromising terms against an attack: first, because the shortage of heavy artillery and gun ammunition put an offensive of any kind out of the question for the time being; secondly, because the open ground, where the French asked that the attack of the First Army should be made, was unfavourable and the German defences beyond it were particularly strong and well sited. Further, the British leaders were only too well aware that their practised teams of commanders and staff officers no longer existed, and that their divisions were not yet the instruments demanded by the exigencies of modern war. The old Regular divisions had suffered crushing casualties and had been filled up with half-trained officers and men; the Territorial Force divisions were new to war and without professional officers and N.C.O.'s; and the divisions of the New Army were improvised, had received only hasty and imperfect training, were handicapped by great disadvantages as regards instructors and the late arrival of weapons and equipment, and possessed only a sprinkling of Regular officers. An attack on an entrenched position is not merely a matter of the commander making a good plan and getting it thoroughly understood and rehearsed. Once released an attack does not roll on to its appointed end like a pageant or a play. Innumerable unforeseen and unrehearsed situations, apart from loss of the actors by casualties, begin at once to occur. Troops must be led and there must be leaders in every rank, and in the later part of 1915 these leaders were in the making.

The leading of the 2/Welch after it had broken through and arrived in rear of the enemy trenches near Lone Tree, which resulted in the surrender of Ritter's force, and enabled the 2nd Brigade to advance, was an exhibition of initiative only too rare on the 25th September. The creation and continued existence of a large gap in the 1st Division front indicated how low the standard of staff work had fallen.

The staff work before and during the battle was very far from perfect. There had been too few staff officers in peace time—two per Regular division and one per Territorial division—and only a small reserve. Lord Roberts's warning to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa—"Staff officers cannot be improvised; nor can they learn their duties, like the rank and file, in a few weeks or months; for their duties are as varied as they

"are important", had been ignored.¹ Laymen even will have noticed how continually the staff work failed.

Loos was certainly a difficult battlefield on which to maintain direction, from the similarity of the landmarks on it: mine-heads, buildings and oblong copses; but the number of occasions on which troops mistook their objectives is extraordinary.² It was a difficulty that had been overcome by good staff work at manœuvres in England, even in blind country intersected with hedgerows. The delays and the unnecessary hardships inflicted on the 21st, 24th and Guards Divisions on their way up to, and in their advance across, the battlefield might have been averted by a good system of road control, and the marking and policing of "Up" and "Down" routes. The time allowed for orders to reach the front companies and be acted upon was insufficient.

Nor was the inadequacy of the training of the staff and regimental officers and men compensated by the assignment to the new formations of a special proportion of first-class war material. Half-trained troops should be supported by more than the usual allotment of artillery; yet even the normal pre-war number of field guns per division was lacking,³ the heavy guns were wholly inadequate to their task, and many of the artillerymen were not so well instructed in their work as the infantry in theirs, their training having been worse handicapped by shortage of material and equipment. Not only heavy guns but ammunition to make the breaches, through which partly trained infantry might have succeeded in advancing, was almost entirely lacking; and the equipment for close fighting—trench-mortars and hand-grenades—was mainly improvised and sadly inferior to that of the enemy.

In this dilemma, impressed by the necessity of obeying Lord Kitchener's orders to the full (since the continuance of the Entente itself might depend on their co-operation) the British leaders very naturally grasped at the assistance that the use of gas—now just available—might afford them, and the new instrument, although falling far short of the success hoped for, did not altogether play them false, and

¹ It may be recalled that in 1900 the Dowager Empress of China, in the Imperial Rescript which called into being the new Chinese Army, said "an officer corps is expensive, but it cannot be improvised".

² *E.g.*, the 15th Division turned south towards Cité St. Laurent instead of going on eastwards to Cité St. Auguste; the 21st Division, instead of attacking eastwards against Bois Hugo, sheered south-east towards Hill 70.

³ 64 per new division as against 76 in the 1914 divisions.

the British with gas did better than the more seasoned French troops without gas.

It would be idle to pretend that the outcome of the battle of Loos was not a bitter disappointment ; the more so as such decisive results had been expected from the attack of the French Tenth Army, to facilitate which the battle was undertaken and fought. Partly owing to the extended front that he had been forced to take over, the British Commander-in-Chief had not enough men or enough ammunition to carry out a great offensive ; but in close combination with the French, and assisted by gas, success had not seemed beyond attainment. Once engaged the British leaders gave themselves whole-heartedly to the task, and the new divisions backed them to the very best of their powers until they found that task hopeless.

The plan devised by General Haig—hampered as he was by the uncertainty as to whether it would be possible to use gas on a particular morning—was a sound one. It was known that the Germans had no large reserves at hand, and it was fair to assume that the great French effort in Champagne, and the lesser one on the immediate right near Souchez would draw off a considerable portion, if not all, of the small numbers available. Though victories cannot be won without taking risks, often high risks, in this case at least an initial success seemed almost to be a certainty, if both Allies deployed their full strength. Attacked on a long front at many places, the Germans would be in a quandary as to where to put in their reserves, would probably hesitate, and some divisions, either French or British, would be able to break in and possibly break through.

Despite the fact that all that was expected of the gas did not happen—and the attack on a wide front without even moderate artillery backing was undertaken on the assumption that the gas would be a “hundred per cent” success—yet on the southern part of the British front its release had a decided effect. The advance of some of the divisions was magnificent, and, in spite of gas hanging about, wire and heavy fire, they went straight through to their objectives. Guns and prisoners were captured, and the enemy’s defence was severely shaken. Had fresh divisions been available immediately to exploit the initial success by forcing their way through the broken lines of resistance, in all probability the victory, so far as breaking through the two German positions, would have

been complete. Every minute was undoubtedly bringing German reinforcements nearer and enabling the enemy to collect his panic-stricken men, and compel them to hold on to the last line of defence. Time was the essence of the matter. Everything depended upon whether the British general reserve or the German units to stem the flood arrived first. And the former might have been ready and prepared to move at the shortest notice to the place where the German line was most likely to break, whilst the enemy was bound to wait and see where his scanty reserves were most required. On the one side there was a clear cut issue; on the other, doubt and the doubtful problem which usually confronts the defender.

The First Army and its corps had not kept back reserves, but had used all their forces in the front line; for everyone understood that the XI. Corps constituted the reserve that would push through, or at least would be sent up by divisions as soon as the reserve brigades of the assaulting divisions had been put in. The head of the XI. Corps might have been up by 6.30 A.M. (the hour of the original assault), well fed, its route reconnoitred and cleared. At 10.30 A.M. the two leading divisions were still in their bivouacs behind Noeux les Mines and Beuvry. By that hour it was already too late; the critical moment had passed, the momentum had been lost, and, though it was still possible to gain a minor success, the big opportunity had gone for ever. By 9 A.M. the first-line divisions had shot their bolt and were nearly spent, and when G.H.Q. were forced to consider handing over the XI. Corps to the First Army the head of its leading division was six miles away from where it was wanted. Spasmodic endeavours took the place of prolonged concentrated effort.

The attempt of Sir John French to influence a battle by holding back divisions in reserve was ill-considered and tactically out of date; he had not even had routes specially marked and kept clear so that the general reserve could be rushed up at the utmost speed. War-experienced divisions would no doubt have managed to get up to the front more quickly than did the two newly arrived ones chosen by the Commander-in-Chief, and would have reached the field comparatively fresh and well fed; but to hold back a reserve composed of such raw troops was fatal.

The 21st and 24th Divisions were imperfectly trained, had never been in the line, far less in battle, and did not

know the ground ; but given the opportunity which had been offered, with the German infantry on the run and guns limbering up and going, they were probably adequate to take a certain advantage of it. Indeed, the Commander-in-Chief selected the 21st and 24th Divisions, because he shared the opinion expressed at the time by some officers who had been in the Ypres Salient, that divisions long engaged in trench warfare, had got out of the way of attacking and manœuvring in the open, and that therefore it was preferable to employ untried ones. The Guards Division he regarded as a final reserve, a corps d'élite only to be used in the last emergency. He meant to engage the others, but his lack of faith in divisions wholly made up of new troops continued to influence him, and in the end he procrastinated, whilst the First Army, its corps and its divisions, had relied on prompt action. For, although it was certain that Sir John French had been committed to an offensive against his better judgment, all assumed that, having definite orders to attack with vigour, he meant to do his utmost.

Whether three fresh divisions, the Guards leading, employed at the psychological moment would have been enough to deal with the German reserves—including the *Guard Corps* then in hand—can never be known. If the *Guard Corps* had been put in against the British it could not, as it was, have been diverted to the Vimy front, and the French might have broken through and restored the battle. Once battle was engaged, the risk of meeting the enemy reserves had to be taken ; the original assaulting divisions could at any rate have consolidated their gains—as the 47th Division did near the Loos Crassier, the 15th on Hill 70 and the Lens—Hulluch road, and the 7th Division on the line of Gun Trench—whether the XI. Corps came on or not.

The French, with their greater forces, many more guns and vast ammunition supply, as compared with the British, equally failed to break through, but for other reasons. There was no surprise. In Champagne the enemy did not attempt to hold them in his first position, but met them, with every advantage, in his second ; in Artois, the front line on Vimy ridge was of great strength, having been attacked before, and it was entered only at a few places. The French official explanation of their failure is, first, that the infantry was not fully prepared owing to certain divisions arriving on the ground only shortly before

the attack, and others having their tasks and zones of action modified. Secondly, owing to bad weather, the artillery preparation so lacked precision and certainty that a postponement of the attack was advisable, but the state of the ammunition supply did not permit of this. Thirdly, the enemy wire was not effectively destroyed. Fourthly—and this is of particular interest—some of the Army reserves were up too close to the front. As there was no break-through, there was no opportunity to employ them, and, being in the battle zone, they suffered heavy losses for no purpose: further, being so near the front, the area in which they could be used was limited and they were not available to be directed where they were most particularly required.

Notwithstanding the stalemate and the heavy losses, **Sketch C:** the battle of Loos was far from shaking the faith of the officers and men of the B.E.F. in their power to break through the German line: indeed, their confidence was only increased thereby. Many had seen, all knew, that the line had been broken; for they had the satisfaction of seeing prisoners and captured material. There were the definite results that eight thousand yards of German front had been taken, including localities fortified at leisure by all the experience and skill of the German engineers. In places the British troops had advanced over two miles from their front line, the largest advance made by the Allies on the Western front since trench warfare had begun. In spite of high authorities saying openly that the German defences were so strong that they could never be pierced, the event had shown that it was possible, given some element of surprise, sufficient guns, ammunition and other appliances, and adequately trained troops, to break the enemy's front. All knew that, as a whole, the new divisions had done magnificently, and would do better next time, in spite of the heavy gaps in their ranks.

Those who had doubted whether improvised divisions would ever be able to fight an offensive battle, and whose doubts had been confirmed after Suvla, with apparent justification, now began to revise their opinions and admit that it could be done, although a few said that it would be at a price Britain could hardly afford to pay.

That more had not been accomplished at Loos was attributed by the troops to bad luck and a succession of accidents. Finally, all ranks had gained experience, and for the first time it became possible to draw up reasoned

instructions, founded on the battle, as to the methods to be pursued if an assault was to be successful under the new conditions.

At the same time, however, the enemy also had gained more experience in the *Abwehrschlacht*, the defensive battle, and was thus able, as ever, to make the British task more difficult in the next battle. Departing from his peace-time principle of "one line and a strong one", he had countered by constructing a second position well behind his first. He thus provided against the destruction of his front line wire and the danger of a surprise assault where there was no obstacle to delay the attacker and keep him under machine-gun fire. As fast as one line was lost, he set about digging another; so as, in all circumstances, to have at least two lines. To turn to details, he evolved cylinders and balls of barbed wire that could be thrown over the parapet to fill up gaps. He made switches and blocks to isolate portions of trench lost and to offer a new but still unbroken front, and constructed machine-gun posts and strong points between his main lines. He had always taken great precautions to shelter his machine guns, but now began to elaborate their emplacements into shell-proof reinforced concrete boxes. In view of the increasing severity of the Allied bombardment, to protect the trench garrison until the moment of assault he set about making deep dug-outs mined far below the surface; and when this was impossible because of the water-level, he built concrete shelters. Finally, when all his devices in the field failed to hold the Allies back, he constructed in the winter of 1916-17, under peace conditions well behind the front, a perfectly sited, deliberately fortified line, and then fell back to it.

NOTE I

THE GERMAN CASUALTIES AT LOOS OPPOSITE THE BRITISH

The following list of casualties has been supplied by the *Reichsarchiv*.¹

¹ Various regiments and battalions mentioned in previous Notes as having been engaged, amounting to 14 units in all, are not included in the list, viz. the 77th Reserve and 91st Reserve Regiments of the 38th Reserve Brigade, one battalion of the 40th Division, one battalion of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, the II. Bavarian Corps Composite Regiment and the 3rd Guard Grenadier Regiment. The total casualties of these units in the period 25th September to 8th October 1915 as given in the official *Verlustliste* were 6,140. The total German losses opposite the British would therefore appear to have been about 26,000.

GERMAN LOSSES

401

21st-30th September :

	Killed.	Officers. Wounded.	Missing.	Killed.	Other Ranks. Wounded.	Missing.
117th Infantry Div. with 26th Reserve Infantry Brigade		155			7,633	
VII. Corps	15	16	5	642	1,623	420
IV. Corps (less 117th In- fantry Div. and 26th Res. Inf. Bde.	30	64	7	559	2,273	747

1st-10th October :

	Killed.	Officers. Wounded.	Missing.	Killed.	Other Ranks. Wounded.	Missing.
117th Infantry Div. with 233rd Reserve Infantry Regiment		16			992	
VII. Corps	12	22	..	152	661	283
IV. Corps (less 117th In- fantry Div., 123rd In- fantry Div., 216th and 233rd Res. Inf. Regi- ments	15	36	5	267	1,607	488
123rd Infantry Div. with 216th Reserve Inf. Regi- ment	11	27	5	134	647	267
Total Officers				441	19,836	
Other Ranks				19,395		

NOTE II

TOTAL GERMAN LOSSES TO THE END OF 1915

The total German losses reported from August 1914 to December 1915, arrived at by adding up the official *Verlustliste*, were :—

Wounded remaining with their units	93,827
Died of disease	31,443
Prisoner	85,333
Dead	601,751
Missing	242,347
Wounded	249,296
Severely wounded	357,694
Slightly wounded	935,361
	<hr/>
	2,597,052

The casualties furnished by the *Reichsarchiv* for particular battles are taken from the returns rendered by formations in 10-day periods (three times a month). In these "wounded remaining with their units" are not included, but it is now impossible to say how many of the "slightly wounded" were treated in the corps areas and therefore not reported. Owing to the destruction of returns during the revolution, it is equally impossible to discover how many wounded died of wounds. Thus, only a general comparison of the losses on the two belligerent sides in any particular battle can be made, although the grand totals arrived at subsequent to the conclusion of peace, after certain corrections on averages, may be approximately reliable.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CLOSE OF 1915

THE DEPARTURE OF THE INDIAN CORPS. THE INCEPTION OF THE SALONIKA EXPEDITION AND THE EVACUATION OF THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULA. THE RETIREMENT OF FIELD-MARSHAL SIR JOHN FRENCH

THE DEPARTURE OF THE INDIAN CORPS

ON the 13th August, General Sir John Nixon, commanding in Mesopotamia, suggested that he should be reinforced by an Indian division from France in view of further operations and an advance on Baghdad. On the same day, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, in a letter to the Viceroy said that he was anxious to get the Indian infantry divisions withdrawn from France before winter conditions set in. After some discussion, Lord Kitchener at first objecting to the reduction of the number of divisions in France,¹ on the 31st October instructions were received at G.H.Q. that the Indian Corps would shortly be sent to embark at Marseilles, with a view to its transfer to Mesopotamia. It was to leave behind the six Special Reserve and Territorial Force battalions attached to it, as well as three 18-pdr. brigades Royal Field Artillery of the Lahore Division. On the 4th November the relief of the Lahore and Meerut Divisions by the XI. Corps was begun, and was completed on the 6th. On the 25th November the Prince of Wales read on behalf of His Majesty the King-Emperor a Royal message of thanks to a parade of representatives of the British and Indian units composing the corps. On the 8th December the Indian Corps ceased as such to exist, and on the 26th December the last transport left Marseilles.

¹ The details will be found in the Official History of the Mesopotamia Campaign, Vol. I. pp. 307-11; Vol. II. pp. 5, 9-11, 19-21, 27-8, 126.

The winter climate and hardships of the Western theatre of war had been particularly trying to the Indian soldier; the corps had suffered very heavy losses in the fighting before La Bassée, at Neuve Chapelle, Second Ypres, Festubert, and Aubers, and in the subsidiary attacks at the battle of Loos. Its total casualties from its arrival in France in October 1914 to the 19th November 1915 had been

			Officers.	Other Ranks.
British units			524	12,283
Indian units :				
British personnel			496	47
Indian „			495	20,375
Staff :				
British „			10	16
Indian „			—	6
			<u>1,525</u>	<u>32,727</u>

Reinforcements had from the first been a constant source of anxiety, and the reserve system, when subjected to the test of a great war outside India, had failed; the battalions had become mere amalgamations of drafts from all quarters held together by the few officers and men of the original force who still remained.

The loss of British officers had been very heavy from the outset, and they could only be replaced by officers of other regiments in India, which could ill afford to spare them, and of the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, who often lacked experience and training, and even knowledge of the language spoken in the regiments to which they were sent.

Only the very best class of soldier was fit to oppose the Germans. The first reserve of 10 per cent which accompanied the corps to France was exhausted, before the units reached the front, in replacing the sick and unfit; many of the reservists proved too old, and unsuited for service on medical grounds and from lack of training. So detachments from other regiments had to be drafted to France, and men of the Military Police Corps and the local troops of the Indian Princes were utilized. To continue this system indefinitely would, by degrees, have depleted the force on which the defence of India depended; but, after the fighting during the battle of Loos, it was felt that deterioration had set in, and the corps could be better

employed in a theatre more suited to its characteristics and where conditions were less severe. It had played its part well and bravely during the most critical period of the early months, and now that the new divisions were coming along it could be spared from the Western front. The Indian Cavalry Corps remained in France.

H.M. THE KING'S SECOND VISIT

That His Majesty did not himself take leave of his Indian troops was due to an accident that occurred during his second visit to the Army in France. He arrived at Boulogne on the 21st October and inspected the depots and hospitals there and at Rouen and Havre. From the 24th to the 28th, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, who was serving as A.D.C. to the Commander-in-Chief, he visited his troops, seeing representatives of the 6th, 14th and 49th Divisions of the VI. Corps; the 3rd, 9th, 17th and 24th Divisions of the V. Corps; the Canadian Corps; the 15th and 47th Divisions of the IV. Corps; the 2nd and 7th Divisions of the I. Corps and the Guards, 12th and 46th Divisions of the XI. Corps. On the 26th he was received at Amiens by the President of the French Republic and General Joffre, and inspected French troops of the XXXV. and II. Colonial Corps. On the 28th October, after his visit to the XI. Corps, whilst he was inspecting No. 2 Squadron R.F.C. at Hesdigneul Aerodrome, the men without any warning gave three cheers, causing his horse to rear suddenly, slip back, and fall on him. His Majesty had to be carried off the field, but was so far recovered by the 1st November that he could be removed to England, travelling by hospital ship, and being carried on a stretcher into Buckingham Palace.

SALONIKA AND GALLIPOLI

The French decision to bring the Champagne and Artois offensives to an end had been hastened by the state of affairs in the Balkans. For some time the French Government had had under consideration the despatch to the east of a force under General Sarrail, who had been removed by General Joffre from command of the French Third Army in June, with a view to "an expedition to the coast of Asia Minor, either along the coast or from the Gulf of Adramyti, which would permit of marching on Brusa or taking in reverse the Turks defending the

“ Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles. Operations more to the south were perhaps preferable, towards Smyrna, or, better still, Alexandretta, in order to have something of the nature of pledges in one’s possession. Finally it was said that action towards Salonika appeared capable of giving more appreciable results.”¹ It was proposed to send four French divisions, and at a conference at Calais on the 11th September, at which M. Millerand, General Joffre, General Sarraill, Lord Kitchener, and Sir John French were present, Great Britain agreed to send two divisions. The final decision in the matter was postponed until the result of the offensives of the 25th September in France was known. It had been obvious for some time that Serbia would require assistance to hold her own against another attack by Austria-Hungary, possibly supported by a German contingent, and not improbably by Bulgaria and Turkey, who had concluded the Dedeagatch agreement. On the 22nd September, Bulgaria having ordered general mobilization for the 25th, the Prime Minister of Serbia asked for 150,000 Allied troops, M. Venizelos, the Prime Minister of Greece, making an identical request. The Allies guaranteed to support Greece in fulfilling her pledges to Serbia. Lord Kitchener suggested that the British contingent for the expedition might be obtained by the abandonment of Suvla Bay, which would release two divisions: these, with some Yeomanry already on the way eastwards, would make 37,400 men. General Joffre, on the other hand, without absolutely opposing the project, thought that “ the amount of our [French] participation was strictly limited by our resources in men and munitions, and that the major effort should be made by England, who still had numerous divisions at her disposal”,² On the 26th September, General Sir Ian Hamilton, commanding at the Dardanelles, was ordered to prepare two divisions for despatch to Salonika; but as the French were sending one from his command, he did not consider he could spare so many, and eventually only one, the 10th Division, was taken from him. It arrived at Salonika on the 5th October, at the same time as the French 156th Division, a formation made up of the best elements of the French Corps at the Dardanelles. On the 6th October the Austro-German forces opened their carefully prepared campaign against Serbia,

¹ General Sarraill, “ Mon Commandement en Orient ”, pp. ix.-x.

² French Official Account, Tome iii. p. 636.

beginning the passage of the Danube and the Save next day. On the 7th October, King Constantine of Greece definitely refused to intervene on behalf of Serbia, and M. Venizelos resigned and was replaced by M. Zaimis. On the 14th October, Bulgaria declared war on Serbia and advanced into Macedonia. On the 15th, Great Britain and, on the 16th, France declared war on Bulgaria.

In consequence of these events, M. Delcassé, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, resigned and brought about, on the 29th, the fall of the Viviani Cabinet. M. Briand succeeded to the Presidency of the Council, with General Galliéni as Minister of War.

Meanwhile, General Sir C. C. Monro, commanding the Third Army in France, had been sent to the Gallipoli peninsula to report for or against evacuation, and on the 20th October he was instructed to take over command from Sir Ian Hamilton.

At a final Allied Conference at Calais on the 5th October, it was agreed that France, in addition to the division already despatched, should provide for Salonika two others—the 57th and 122nd were sent from France—and two cavalry divisions, a total of 64,000, and that the British should send three more divisions, making a total of 67,000. Two new divisions, the 22nd and 26th, which had landed in France on the 3rd-6th September and 20th-22nd September respectively, were despatched to Salonika, arriving there the 5th-10th and 22nd-26th November. They were reinforced by two seasoned formations: the 27th Division, which began to arrive from France on the 15th November, and the 28th Division, which had been sent from France to Egypt late in October and commenced disembarking at Salonika on the 25th November.¹ Thus four British divisions were withdrawn from the Western Front. But as the Salonika theatre began to call for men and munitions, the operations at the Dardanelles were drawing to a close. On the 3rd November the newly constituted War Committee of the Cabinet met for the first time. It was opposed, as General Joffre found,² to Balkan operations,

¹ Lack of shipping and the necessity of making convoy arrangements (the Indian Corps was also leaving from Marseilles) caused considerable delay in the movement of the 27th Division, and the limited landing facilities at Salonika also hindered the concentration of the troops in the new theatre. The 28th Division, of which two R.F.A. brigades proceeded direct to Salonika from Marseilles, was hardly complete on the 10th December, and the 27th Division not till nearly a month later.

² "Essai sur la doctrine de Guerre des Coalitions", by Colonel Oehmichen, head of General Joffre's Section for Operations in Exterior Theatres.

and the following day Lord Kitchener himself proceeded to the Gallipoli peninsula. The Cabinet on the 7th December agreed to the evacuation of Anzac and Suvla, and this was completed on the 20th of that month. On the 27th the abandonment of the peninsula was agreed to and the evacuation of Helles was completed on the 8th January 1916.

The measures to succour Serbia were too late. On the 23rd October the Bulgarians after some severe fighting had occupied Uskub, cutting off the Serbs from any possibility of falling back on Salonika. On the 30th November the Serbian retreat through Albania began, and on the 15th December the last French and British forces in Macedonia were withdrawn into Greek territory.

THE RETIREMENT OF SIR JOHN FRENCH

The failure of successive offensives on the Western front during 1915 to achieve even any considerable gain of ground, the loss of a great part of the Ypres Salient, and the very heavy casualties, had cooled the ardent optimism with which Sir John French had begun the year. He was 63 years of age and his physical powers were on the wane. Few commanders have ever had a more overwhelming task to fulfil or a more difficult part to play. Opposed to a thoroughly prepared and perfectly equipped enemy, superior in numbers and in possession of the initiative, the British Commander-in-Chief was far from having a free hand. He had indisputably all the encouragement and support that the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, and the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, could give him; but he was called on to explain his plans to them, and on one occasion during the retreat to the Seine, the Government, using Lord Kitchener as their mouthpiece, had interfered. His first duty, as the original instructions given to him in August 1914 made clear,¹ was the military security of his force. But he had also, as far as possible, to fall in with the wishes of the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joffre, and the often contrary desires of the latter's lieutenant, General Foch. He had frequently, in compliance with these wishes—for instance, as regards the evacuation of the Ypres Salient after the failure of the French to regain the part which they had lost, and again

¹ See "1914" Vol. I. Appendix 8.

as to participation in the battle of Loos—to act against his own better judgment. Continually, as his force increased, he had to take over additional sectors of the front, so that despite reinforcements—as a result of which the strength of the B.E.F. rose from 6 divisions and 5 cavalry brigades to 37 divisions and 5 cavalry divisions (25th September 1915) with heavy artillery and administrative services to correspond—he never could constitute a substantial reserve. Involved in the operations of an Ally over which he had no control, and having to watch an ever-ready foe—the only opponent of first and equal rank that the British army had faced for nearly a hundred years, and who had long been preparing for the war and had the prestige of a series of successful wars behind him—Sir John French had to keep constant watch on the expenditure of the exiguous British resources in guns and munitions. Under entirely new conditions of warfare, with insufficient and improvised means, he had to measure his actions not by what was desirable, but what was possible, and that with a force ever dwindling in value as regards military training. The men of the Old Army, with which he had grown up, disappeared rapidly, removed by death, sickness and wounds, and their places were taken by Territorials and the New Army: magnificent material, but, from his point of view comparatively untrained as soldiers and led by officers and N.C.O.'s who knew little more of war than did their men. After the collapse of the Loos offensive and the equally fruitless efforts of the French to get forward either in Champagne or in Artois, Sir John French openly stated his doubts as to a successful termination of the war.

At home there was profound disappointment at the ill-success of the campaign of 1915: Neuve Chapelle, Second Ypres, Aubers Ridge, Festubert and Loos had involved terrible loss of life without having shaken the enemy, far less broken his line. The difficulties of the task, the lack of adequate means, and the even greater failures and greater losses of our Allies, were an explanation that might well be urged. But over and above the impression left by the events of the past year was the consideration that with his obviously failing health—his heart was giving trouble and his medical adviser had from time to time to prescribe several days' rest in bed—Sir John French was unlikely to be equal to the task of commanding the larger armies which would be available in 1916.

For two months the question of the removal of the

Commander-in-Chief occupied the attention of the Cabinet, and Ministers made repeated visits to France. Finally, on the 15th December, Viscount Esher arrived at G.H.Q. with a message from the Prime Minister, who was Acting Secretary of State for War during Lord Kitchener's absence at the Dardanelles, informing Sir John French that it had been decided to relieve him and suggesting that the initiative should be taken by Sir John himself. The appointment of Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief the Home Forces, and the reward of a Viscounty for his great services, were placed at his disposal. These offers he accepted without question, admitting that, although he was not himself conscious of the strain of the war having had any serious effect upon his mental and physical powers, others might take a different view. At noon on Sunday the 17th December he laid down the command of the British Armies in France and Flanders.

The question of the next commander in France had equally been the subject of earnest discussion. There were in question only two officers of sufficient experience and prestige. They were General Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of the First Army, and Lieut.-General Sir William Robertson, then Chief of the General Staff of the B.E.F., and in 1914 its Quartermaster-General. The former, who had the advantage of having commanded fighting troops right through the campaign, was appointed successor to Sir John French; whilst, the better to exercise control over all the military operations of the Empire, General Robertson was called to London to become the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, succeeding Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Murray, who proceeded to take command of the forces on the Eastern frontiers of Egypt. Lieut.-General Sir Launcelot Kiggell from Director of Home Defence at the War Office, became Chief of the General Staff of the B.E.F., with Major-General R. H. K. Butler, Sir Douglas Haig's Chief of the General Staff in the First Army, as Sub-Chief of the General Staff.¹ Sir William Robertson took with him to London the heads of his Operation and Intelligence Sections, Br.-Generals F. B. Maurice and G. M. W. Macdonogh, who respectively were given the appointments of Director of Military Operations and Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office. Their successors in France were Br.-Generals J. H.

¹ Sir D. Haig asked that General Butler might be his C.G.S., but this officer was considered too junior for the appointment.

Davidson and J. Charteris. General Sir C. C. Monro was appointed to follow Sir D. Haig in the First Army, but, pending his absence on a special mission to the Dardanelles, that Army was commanded temporarily by Lieut.-General Sir H. S. Rawlinson. General Sir E. H. H. Allenby had already succeeded General Monro in command of the Third Army.

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APPENDICES

COMPOSITION OF THE HIGHER STAFFS

OF THE

BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

MAY 1915¹

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS

Commander-in-Chief . . Field-Marshal Sir J. D. P. French,
G.C.B., O.M., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G.

GENERAL STAFF BRANCH :

Chief of the General Staff Lieut.-General Sir W. R. Robertson,
K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O.

Sub-Chief of the General Staff Br.-General E. M. Perceval, C.B.,
D.S.O.
[Major-General R. D. Whigham, C.B.,
D.S.O.]

Br.-General G.S. (Operations) Br.-General F. B. Maurice, C.B.

Br.-General G.S. (Intelligence) Br.-General G. M. W. Macdonogh,
C.B.

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S BRANCH :

Adjutant-General . . Lieut.-General Sir C. F. N. Macready,
K.C.B.

Deputy Adjutant-General (at the Base) Major-General [Sir] E. R. C. Graham,
C.B. [K.C.B.]

QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S BRANCH :

Quartermaster-General . Lieut.-General Sir R. C. Maxwell,
K.C.B.

ATTACHED :

Major-General, Royal Artillery Major-General J. P. du Cane, C.B.

Engineer-in-Chief Major-General G. H. Fowke, C.B.

¹ Subsequent changes which occurred before the Battle of Loos are shown in square brackets.

APPENDIX 1

FIRST ARMY

Commander	General Sir D. Haig, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O., A.D.C. General.
Br.-[Major-]General, General Staff	Br.-[Major-]General R. H. K. Butler.
D.A. and Q.M.G. . . .	Br.-[Major-]General P. E. F. Hobbs, C.B., C.M.G.
Major-General, Royal Artillery	Major-General H. F. Mercer, C.B., A.D.C.
Chief Engineer	Major-General S. R. Rice, C.B.

SECOND ARMY

Commander	Lieut.-General [General] Sir H. C. O. Plumer, K.C.B.
Major-General, General Staff	Major-General G. F. Milne, C.B., D.S.O.
	[Major-General H. B. Williams, C.B., D.S.O.]
D.A. and Q.M.G. . . .	Br.-General W. H. Rycroft, C.B., C.M.G.
	[Major-General F. Wintour, C.B.]
Major-General, Royal Artillery	Major-General J. E. W. Headlam, C.B., D.S.O.
Chief Engineer	Major-General F. M. Glubb, C.B., D.S.O.

THIRD ARMY¹

Commander	General Sir C. C. Monro, K.C.B.
Major-General, General Staff	Major-General A. L. Lynden-Bell, C.B., C.M.G.
D.A. and Q.M.G. . . .	Major-General W. Campbell, C.B., D.S.O.
Major-General, Royal Artillery	Major-General R. A. K. Montgomery, C.B., D.S.O.
[Br.-General, Royal Artillery]	Br.-General A. B. Scott, C.B., D.S.O.]
Chief Engineer	Major-General J. E. Capper, C.B.

ROYAL FLYING CORPS

Commander	Major-General Sir D. Henderson, K.C.B., D.S.O.
	[Br.-General H. M. Trenchard, C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C.]
G.S.O. 1	Colonel F. H. Sykes.
	[Lieut.-Colonel H. R. M. Brooke- Popham, D.S.O. from 26.9.15.]

¹ Formed 11th July 1915.

ORDER OF BATTLE

FIRST ARMY

AUBERS RIDGE AND FESTUBERT 1915

I. CORPS

Commander	Lieut.-Gen. Sir C. C. Monro, K.C.B.
Br.-General, General Staff .	Br.-Gen. R. D. Whigham, C.B., D.S.O.
D.A. and Q.M.G.	Br.-Gen. H. N. Sargent, D.S.O.
Br.-General, Royal Artillery	Br.-Gen. R. A. K. Montgomery, C.B., D.S.O.
Chief Engineer	Br.-Gen. C. Godby.

1ST DIVISION : Major-Gen. R. C. B. Haking.

1st (Guards) Brigade : Br.-Gen. H. C. Lowther.

1/Coldstream Gds.	1/Black Watch.	1/14th London (London Scottish) (T.F.).
1/Scots Gds.	1/Cameron's.	

2nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. H. Thesiger.

2/R. Sussex.	1/L. N. Lancs.	1/9th King's (T.F.).
1/Northampton- shire.	2/K.R.R.C.	1/5th R. Sussex (T.F.).

3rd Brigade : Br.-Gen. H. R. Davies.

1/S.W.B.	2/Welch.	1/4th R. Welch Fus.
1/Gloucestershire.	2/R. Mun. Fus.	(T.F.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

XXV. (118, 114, 115 Btys.).	XXXIX. (46, 51, 54 Btys.).
XXVI. (116, 117 Btys.).	

Field Coys. R.E. : 23, 26 & 1/1st Lowland (T.F.).

Mtd. Troops : B Sqdn. Northumberland Hrs. (Yeo.). Cyclist Coy.

2ND DIVISION : Major-Gen. H. S. Horne.

4th (Guards) Brigade : Br.-Gen. F. R. Earl of Cavan.

2/Grenadier Gds.	3/Coldstream Gds.	1/1st Herts (T.F.).
2/Coldstream Gds.	1/Irish Gds.	

5th Brigade : Br.-Gen. A. A. Chichester.

2/R. Inniskilling Fus.	2/Oxf. & Bucks L.I.	1/9th Highland L.I. (T.F.).
2/Worcestershire.	2/Highland L.I.	

6th Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. Fanshawe.

1/King's. 1/R. Berkshire.

1/5th King's (T.F.).

2/S. Staffordshire. 1/K.R.R.C.

1/7th King's (T.F.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

XXXIV. (50, 70 Btys.).

XLI. (9, 16, 17 Btys.).

XXXVI. (15, 48, 71 Btys.)

XLIV. (How.) 47, 56, 60 Btys.

R.G.A. : 7/Mountain Bty.

Field Coys. R.E. : 5, 11 & 1/1st E. Anglian (T.F.).

Mid. Troops : B Sqdn. S. Irish Horse.

Cyclist Coy.

47TH (LONDON) DIVISION (T.F.) : Major-Gen. C. St. L. Barter.

140th Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. J. Cuthbert.

1/6th London (City of 1/8th London (Post Office Rifles).

1/7th London (London). 1/15th London (Civil Service Rifles).

141st Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. C. Nugent.

1/17th London (Poplar & Stepney Rifles). 1/19th London (St. Pancras).

1/18th London (London Irish). 1/20th London (Blackheath & Woolwich).

142nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. Hon. C. S. Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby.

1/21st London (1st Surrey Rifles). 1/23rd London.

1/22nd London (The Queen's). 1/24th London (The Queen's).

R.F.A. Bdes.

V. London (12, 13, 14 Btys.).¹ VII. London (18, 19, 20 Btys.).¹

VI. London (15, 16, 17 Btys.).¹ VIII. London (How.) 21 & 22 Btys.²

Field Coys. R.E. : 1/3rd & 1/4th London.

Mid. Troops : C Sqdn. King Edward's Horse. Cyclist Coy.

1ST CANADIAN DIVISION :³ Lieut.-Gen. E. A. H. Alderson.

1st Canadian Bde. : Br.-Gen. M. S. Mercer.

1st Bn. (Western Ontario Regt.). 3rd Bn. (Toronto Regt.).

2nd Bn. (Eastern Ontario Regt.). 4th Bn.

2nd Canadian Bde. : Br.-Gen. A. W. Currie.

5th Bn. (Western Cavalry). 8th Bn. (Winnipeg Rifles).

7th Bn. (1st British Columbia Regt.). 10th Bn. (10th Canadians).

3rd Canadian Bde. : Br.-Gen. R. E. W. Turner, V.C.

13th Bn. (Royal Highlanders of Canada). 15th Bn. (48th Highlanders of Canada).

14th Bn. (Royal Montreal Regt.). 16th Bn. (Canadian Scottish).

Canadian F.A. Bdes.

I. (1, 2, 3, 4 Btys.).⁴

III. (9, 10, 11, 12 Btys.).⁴

II. (5, 6, 7, 8 Btys.).⁴

R.F.A. Bde. : CXVIII. (How.) 458 & 459 Btys.

Canadian Field Coys. : 1, 2, 3.

Mid. Troops : Special Service Sqdn.

Cyclist Coy.

¹ Battery = four 15-pdrs.

² Battery = four 5"-hows.

³ In corps reserve 15th May.

⁴ 4-gun batteries.

IV. CORPS

Commander	Lieut.-Gen. Sir H. S. Rawlinson, Bt., K.C.B., C.V.O.
Br.-General, General Staff .	Br.-Gen. A. G. Dallas, C.B.
D.A. and Q.M.G.	Br.-Gen. W. L. White, C.B.
Br.-General, Royal Artillery	Br.-Gen. A. H. Hussey, C.B.
Chief Engineer	Br.-Gen. R. U. H. Buckland, C.B., A.D.C.

7TH DIVISION : Major-Gen. H. de la P. Gough.

20th Brigade : Br.-Gen. F. J. Heyworth.

1/Grenadier Gds.	2/Border.	1/6th Gordons (T.F.).
2/Scots Gds.	2/Gordons.	

21st Brigade : Br.-Gen. H. E. Watts.

2/Bedfordshire.	2/R. Scots Fus.	1/4th Camerons (T.F.).
2/Green Howards.	2/Wiltshire.	

22nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. S. T. B. Lawford.

2/Queen's.	1/R. Welch Fus.	1/8th R. Scots (T.F.).
2/R. Warwickshire.	1/S. Staffordshire.	

R.H.A. Bde. : XIV. (F & T Btys.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

XXII. (104, 105, 106 Btys.).	55th Bty. of
XXXV. (12, 25, 58 Btys.).	XXXVII. (How.) Bde.

Field Coys. R.E. : 54, 55 & 1/2nd Highland (T.F.).

Mtd. Troops : H.Q. & A Sqdn. Northumberland Hrs. (Yeo.).
Cyclist Coy.

8TH DIVISION : Major-Gen. F. J. Davies.

23rd Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. J. Pinney.

2/Devonshire.	2/Scottish Rifles.	1/6th Scottish Rifles (T.F.).
2/W. Yorkshire.	2/Middlesex.	1/7th Middlesex (T.F.).

24th Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. S. Oxley.

1/Worcestershire.	1/Sherwood Foresters.	1/5th Black Watch (T.F.).
2/E. Lancashire.	2/Northamptonshire.	

25th Brigade : Br.-Gen. A. W. G. Lowry Cole.

2/Lincolnshire.	1/R. Irish Rifles.	1/1st London (T.F.).
2/R. Berkshire.	2/Rifle Brigade.	1/13th London (T.F.).

R.H.A. Bde. : V. (O & Z Btys.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

XXXIII. (32, 33, 36 Btys.).	XXXVII. (How.) 81 & 35 Btys.
XLV. (1, 3, 5 Btys.).	

Field Coys. R.E. : 2, 15 & 1/1st Home Counties (T.F.).

Mtd. Troops : C Sqdn. Northumberland Hrs. (Yeo.). Cyclist Coy.

49TH (W. RIDING) DIVISION (T.F.) : Major-Gen. T. S. Baldock.

146th Brigade : Br.-Gen. F. A. MacFarlan.

1/5th W. Yorkshire.	1/7th W. Yorkshire.
1/6th W. Yorkshire.	1/8th W. Yorkshire.

147th Brigade : Br.-Gen. E. F. Brereton.

1/4th Duke of Wellington's. 1/6th Duke of Wellington's.
1/5th Duke of Wellington's. 1/7th Duke of Wellington's.

148th Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. Dawson.

1/4th K.O.Y.L.I. 1/4th York & Lancaster.
1/5th K.O.Y.L.I. 1/5th York & Lancaster.

R.F.A. Bdes.

I. West Riding (1, 2, 3 Btys.).¹ III. West Riding (7, 8, 9 Btys.).
II. West Riding (4, 5, 6 Btys.).¹ IV. West Riding (How.) 10, 11
Btys.²

Field Coy. R.E. : 1/2nd West Riding.

Mtd. Troops : C Sqdn. Yorkshire Hrs. (Yeo.). Cyclist Coy.

INDIAN CORPS

Commander Lieut.-Gen. Sir J. Willcocks, K.C.B.,
K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., D.S.O.
Br.-General, General Staff Br.-Gen. H. Hudson, C.B., C.I.E.
D.A. and Q.M.G. Br.-Gen. A. S. Cobbe, V.C., D.S.O.,
A.D.C.
Br.-General, Royal Artillery Br.-Gen. A. B. Scott, C.B., D.S.O.
Chief Engineer Br.-Gen. H. C. Nanton, C.B.

51ST (HIGHLAND) DIVISION (T.F.)³ :

Major-Gen. R. Bannatine-Allason.

152nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. W. C. Ross.

1/5th Seaforths. 1/6th Argyll & Sutherlands.
1/6th Seaforths. 1/8th Argyll & Sutherlands.

153rd Brigade : Br.-Gen. D. Campbell.

1/6th Black Watch. 1/5th Gordons.
1/7th Black Watch. 1/7th Gordons.

154th Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. L. Hibbert.

1/4th King's Own. 2/5th Lancashire Fus.
1/8th King's. 1/4th L.N. Lincs.

R.F.A. Bdes.

I. Highland (1, 2, 3 Aberdeen Btys.).¹ III. Highland (How.).
II. Highland (Forfar, Fife & Dundee Btys.).¹ 1 & 2 Renfrew Btys.²

Field Coys. R.E. : 1/1st & 2/2nd Highland.

Mtd. Troops : D Sqdn. N. Irish Horse. Cyclist Coy.

LAHORE DIVISION : Major-Gen. H. D'U. Keary.

Ferozepore Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. G. Egerton.

Connaught Rangers. 57th Wilde's Rifles. 1/4th London (T.F.).
9th Bhopal Inftry. 129th Baluchis.

¹ Battery = four 15-pdrs.

² Battery = four 5"-hows.

³ In G.H.Q. reserve with the exception of one R.F.A. brigade.

Jullundur Brigade : Br.-Gen. E. P. Strickland.

1/Manchester.	47th Sikhs.	1/4th Suffolk (T.F.).
40th Pathans.	59th Scinde Rifles.	1/5th Border (T.F.).

Sirhind Brigade : Br.-Gen. W. G. Walker, V.C.

1/Highland L.I.	1/1st Gurkhas.	4/King's (S.R.).
15th Sikhs.	1/4th Gurkhas.	

R.F.A. Bdes.

V. (64, 73, 81 Btys.).	XVIII. (59, 93, 94 Btys.).
XI. (83, 84, 85 Btys.).	XLI. (How.) 40 & 57 Btys.

Engineers : 20 & 21 Coys. 3rd Sappers & Miners.

Pioneers : 34th Sikh Pioneers.

Mtd. Troops : 15th Lancers.

MEERUT DIVISION : Lieut.-Gen. Sir C. A. Anderson, K.C.B.

Dehra Dun Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. W. Jacob.

1/Seaforths.	2/2nd Gurkhas.	1/4th Seaforths (T.F.).
6th Jats.	1/9th Gurkhas.	

Garhwal Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. G. Blackader.

2/Leicestershire.	2/3rd Gurkhas.	1/3rd London (T.F.).
39th Garhwalis.	2/8th Gurkhas.	

Bareilly Brigade : Br.-Gen. W. M. Southey.

2/Black Watch.	58th Vaughan's Rifles.	1/4th Black Watch
41st Dogras.	125th Napier's Rifles.	(T.F.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

IV. (7, 14, 66 Btys.).	XIII. (2, 8, 44 Btys.).
IX. (19, 20, 28 Btys.).	30th Bty. of XLI. (How.) Bde.

Engineers : 3 & 4 Coys. 1st Sappers and Miners.

Pioneers : 107th Pioneers.

Mtd. Troops : 4th Cavalry.

ROYAL FLYING CORPS

1st Wing : Lieut.-Colonel H. M. Trenchard.

Nos. 2, 3, 16 Squadrons.

ORDER OF BATTLE

FIRST ARMY

LOOS 1915

I. CORPS

Commander	Lieut.-Gen. H. de la P. Gough, C.B.
Br.-General, General Staff	Br.-Gen. A. S. Cobbe, V.C., C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C.
D.A. and Q.M.G.	Br.-Gen. H. N. Sargent, C.B., D.S.O.
Br.-General, Royal Artillery	Br.-Gen. J. F. N. Birch, A.D.C.
Chief Engineer	Br.-Gen. R. P. Lee, C.B.

2ND DIVISION : Major-Gen. H. S. Horne.

5th Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. E. Corkran.

1/Queen's.	2/Oxf. & Bucks L.I.	1/7th King's (T.F.).
2/Worcestershire.	2/Highland L.I.	1/9th Highland L.I. (T.F.).

6th Brigade : Br.-Gen. A. C. Daly.

1/King's.	1/R. Berkshire.	1/5th King's (T.F.).
2/S. Staffordshire.	1/K.R.R.C.	1/1st Herts (T.F.).

19th Brigade : Br.-Gen. P. R. Robertson.

2/R. Welch Fus.	1/Middlesex.	1/5th Scottish Rifles
1/Scottish Rifles.	2/Argyll & Suther- lands.	(T.F.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

XXXIV. (50, 70 Btys.).	XLI. (9, 16, 17 Btys.).
XXXVI. (15, 48, 71 Btys.).	XLIV. (How.) 47 & 56 Btys.

Field Coys. R.E. : 5, 11 & 1/1st E. Anglian (T.F.).*Mtd. Troops* : B Sqdn. S. Irish Horse. Cyclist Coy.

7TH DIVISION : Major-Gen. Sir T. Capper, K.C.M.G.

20th Brigade : Br.-Gen. Hon. J. F. Hepburn-Stuart-Forbes-Trefusis.

2/Border.	8/Devonshire.	1/6th Gordons (T.F.).
2/Gordons.	9/Devonshire.	

21st Brigade : Br.-Gen. H. E. Watts.

2/Bedfordshire.	2/R. Scots Fus.	1/4th Camerons (T.F.).
2/Green Howards.	2/Wiltshire.	

22nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. J. McC. Steele.

2/Queen's.	1/R. Welch Fus.
2/R. Warwickshire.	1/S. Staffordshire.

R.H.A. Bde. : XIV. (F & T Btys.).¹

R.F.A. Bdes.

XXII. (104, 105, 106 Btys.). XXXVII. (How.) 31 & 35 Btys.
XXXV. (12, 25, 58 Btys.).

Field Coys. R.E. : 54, 55 & 1/2nd Highland (T.F.).

Mtd. Troops : H.Q. & A Sqdn. Northumberland Hrs. (Yeo.).
Cyclist Coy.

9TH (SCOTTISH) DIVISION : Major-Gen. G. H. Thesiger.

26th Brigade : Br.-Gen. A. B. Ritchie.

8/Black Watch.	8/Gordons.
7/Seaforths.	5/Cameron's.

27th Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. D. Bruce.

11/Royal Scots.	6/R. Scots Fus.
12/Royal Scots.	10/Argyll & Sutherlands.

28th Brigade : Br.-Gen. S. W. Scrase-Dickens.

6/K.O.S.B.	10/Highland L.I.
9/Scottish Rifles.	11/Highland L.I.

R.F.A. Bdes.

L. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ²	LII. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ²
LI. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ²	LIII. (How.) B, C, D Btys. ²

Field Coys. R.E. : 63, 64, 90.

Pioneers : 9/Seaforths.

Mtd. Troops : B Sqdn. Glasgow Yeo. Cyclist Coy.

10th Motor M.G. Bty.

28TH DIVISION : ³ Major-Gen. E. S. Bulfin.

83rd Brigade : Br.-Gen. H. S. L. Ravenshaw.

2/King's Own.	1/K.O.Y.L.I.	1/5th King's Own
2/E. Yorkshire.	1/York & Lancaster.	(T.F.).

84th Brigade : Br.-Gen. T. H. F. Pearse.

2/Northumb. Fus.	2/Cheshire.	1/6th Welch (T.F.).
1/Suffolk.	1/Welch.	

85th Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. E. Pereira.

2/Bufs.	2/E. Surrey.
3/Royal Fus.	3/Middlesex.

R.F.A. Bdes.

III. (18, 22, 62, 365 Btys.). ²	CXXX. (How.) A, B, C Btys. ²
XXXI. (69, 100, 103, 118 Btys.). ²	CXLVI. (75, 149, 366, 367 Btys.). ²

Field Coys. R.E. : 38 & 2/1st Northumbrian (T.F.).

Mtd. Troops : B Sqdn. Surrey Yeo. Cyclist Coy.

¹ Each of six 18-pdrs. which replaced the 13-pdrs. in June.

² 4-gun batteries.

³ Replaced 9th Division in I. Corps, 28th Sept.

III. CORPS

Commander	Lieut.-Gen. Sir W. P. Pulteney, K.C.B., D.S.O.
Br.-General, General Staff .	Br.-Gen. C. F. Romer, C.B.
D.A. and Q.M.G.	Br.-Gen. A. A. Chichester, C.B., D.S.O.
Br.-General, Royal Artillery	Br.-Gen. A. Stokes, C.B., D.S.O.
Chief Engineer	Br.-Gen. A. L. Schreiber, D.S.O., A.D.C.

8TH DIVISION : Major-General H. Hudson.

23rd Brigade : Br.-Gen. H. D. Tuson.

2/Devonshire.	2/Scottish Rifles.	1/7th Middlesex (T.F.).
2/W. Yorkshire.	2/Middlesex.	

24th Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. S. Oxley.

1/Worcestershire.	1/Sherwood Foresters.	1/5th Black Watch
2/E. Lancashire.	2/Northamptonshire.	(T.F.).

25th Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. B. Stephens.

2/Lincolnshire.	1/R. Irish Rifles.	1/8th Middlesex (T.F.).
2/R. Berkshire	2/Rifle Brigade.	1/1st London (T.F.).

R.H.A. Bde. : V. (O & Z Btys.).¹

R.F.A. Bdes.

XXXIII. (32, 33, 36 Btys.). CXXVIII. (How.) 55 & 57 Btys.
XLV. (1, 3, 5 Btys.).

Field Coys. R.E. : 2, 15 & 1/1st Home Counties (T.F.).

Mtd. Troops : C Sqdn. Northumberland Hrs. (Yeo.).
Cyclist Coy.

20TH (LIGHT) DIVISION : Major-General R. H. Davies.

59th Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. D. Shute.

10/K.R.R.C.	10/Rifle Brigade.
11/K.R.R.C.	11/Rifle Brigade.

60th Brigade : Br.-Gen. J. W. G. Ray.

6/Oxf. & Bucks. L.I.	12/K.R.R.C.
6/Shropshire L.I.	12/Rifle Brigade.

61st Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. Ross.

12/King's.	7/D. of Cornwall's L.I.
7/Somerset L.I.	7/K.O.Y.L.I.

R.F.A. Bdes.

XC. (A, B, C, D Btys.).² XCII. (How.) B, C, D Btys.²
XCI. (A, B, C, D Btys.).² XCIII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).²

Field Coys. R.E. : 83, 84, 96.

Pioneers : 11/Durham L.I.

Mtd. Troops : H.Q., M.G. Section & D Sqdn. West. & Cumb. Yeo.
Cyclist Coy.

14th Motor M.G. Bty.

¹ Each of six 18-pdrs. which replaced the 13-pdrs. in June.

² 4-gun batteries.

23RD DIVISION : Major-Gen. J. M. Babington.**68th Brigade :** Br.-Gen. E. Pearce Serocold.

10/Northumberland Fus. 12/Durham L.I.

11/Northumberland Fus. 13/Durham L.I.

69th Brigade : Br.-Gen. F. S. Derham.

11/W. Yorkshire. 9/Green Howards.

8/Green Howards. 10/Duke of Wellington's.

70th Brigade : Br.-Gen. L. F. Phillips.

11/Sherwood Foresters. 8/York & Lancaster.

8/K.O.Y.L.I. 9/York & Lancaster.

R.F.A. Bdes.CII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹CIV. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹CIII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹CV. (How.) A, B, C, D Btys.¹**Field Coys. R.E. :** 101, 102, 128.**Pioneers :** 9/S. Staffordshire.**Mid. Troops :** C Sqdn. Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeo. Cyclist Coy.**IV. CORPS**Commander Lieut.-Gen. Sir H. S. Rawlinson, Bt.,
K.C.B., C.V.O.

Br.-General, General Staff . Br.-Gen. A. A. Montgomery.

D.A. and Q.M.G. . . . Br.-Gen. W. L. White, C.B.

Br.-General, Royal Artillery Br.-Gen. C. E. D. Budworth, M.V.O.

Chief Engineer Br.-Gen. R. U. H. Buckland, C.B.,
A.D.C.**1ST DIVISION : Major-Gen. A. E. A. Holland.****1st Brigade :** Br.-Gen. A. J. Reddie.1/Black Watch. 10/Gloucestershire. 1/14th London (London
1/Camerons. 8/R. Berkshire. Scottish) (T.F.).**2nd Brigade :** Br.-Gen. J. H. W. Pollard.2/R. Sussex. 1/L. N. Lancs. 1/9th King's (T.F.).
1/Northamptonshire. 2/K.R.R.C.**3rd Brigade :** Br.-Gen. H. R. Davies.1/S.W.B. 2/Welch.
1/Gloucestershire. 2/R. Mun. Fus.**R.F.A. Bdes.**

XXV. (113, 114, 115 Btys.). XXXIX. (46, 51, 54 Btys.).

XXVI. (116, 117 Btys.). XLIII. (How.) 30 & 40 Btys.

Field Coys. R.E. : 23, 26 & 1/1st Lowland (T.F.).**Mid. Troops :** B Sqdn. Northumberland Hrs. (Yeo.).

Cyclist Coy.

15TH (SCOTTISH) DIVISION : Maj.-Gen. F. W. N. McCracken.**44th Brigade :** Br.-Gen. M. G. Wilkinson.

9/Black Watch. 10/Gordons.

8/Seaforth's. 7/Camerons.

¹ 4-gun batteries.

45th Brigade : Br.-Gen. F. E. Wallerston.

13/Royal Scots.

6/Cameron's.

7/R. Scots Fus.

11/Argyll & Sutherlands.

46th Brigade : Br.-Gen. T. G. Matheson.

7/K.O.S.B.

10/Scottish Rifles.

8/K.O.S.B.

12/Highland L.I.

R.F.A. Bdes.

LXX. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹

LXXII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹

LXXI. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹

LXXIII. (How.) B, C, D Btys.¹

Field Coys. R.E. : 73, 74, 91.

Pioneers : 9/Gordons.

Mtd. Troops : B Sqdn. Westmoreland & Cumberland Yeo.

Cyclist Coy.

11th Motor M.G. Bty.

47TH (LONDON) DIVISION (T.F.) : Major-Gen. C. St. L. Barter.

140th Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. J. Cuthbert.

1/6th London \ (City of

1/8th London (Post Office Rifles).

1/7th London / London).

1/15th London (Civil Service Rifles).

141st Brigade : Br.-Gen. W. Thwaites.

1/17th London (Poplar & Step- 1/19th London (St. Pancras).
ney Rifles).

1/18th London (London Irish). 1/20th London (Blackheath &
Woolwich).

142nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. F. G. Lewis.

1/21st London (1st Surrey Rifles). 1/23rd London.

1/22nd London (The Queen's). 1/24th London (The Queen's).

R.F.A. Bdes.

V. London (12, 13, 14 Btys.).² VII. London (18, 19, 20 Btys.).²

VI. London (15, 16, 17 Btys.).² VIII. London (How.) 21 & 22 Btys.²

Field Coys. R.E. : 1/3rd, 1/4th & 2/3rd London.

Pioneers : 1/4th R. Welch Fus.

Mtd. Troops : C Sqdn. King Edward's Horse.

Cyclist Coy.

XI. CORPS

Commander	Lieut.-Gen. R. C. B. Haking, C.B.
Br.-General, General Staff .	Br.-Gen. H. M. de F. Montgomery.
D.A. and Q.M.G.	Br.-Gen. R. Ford, C.M.G., D.S.O.
Br.-General, Royal Artillery	Br.-Gen. G. G. S. Carey.
Chief Engineer	Br.-Gen. L. Jones.

GUARDS DIVISION : Major-Gen. F. R. Earl of Cavan.

1st Guards Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. P. T. Feilding.

2/Grenadier Gds.

3/Coldstream Gds.

2/Coldstream Gds.

1/Irish Gds.

¹ 4-gun batteries.

² Battery = four 15-pdrs.

³ Battery = four 5"-hows.

2nd Guards Brigade : Br.-Gen. J. Ponsonby.

3/Grenadier Gds.	1/Scots Gds.
1/Coldstream Gds.	2/Irish Gds.

3rd Guards Brigade : Br.-Gen. F. J. Heyworth.

1/Grenadier Gds.	2/Scots Gds.
4/Grenadier Gds.	1/Welsh Gds.

R.F.A. Bdes.

LXXIV. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ¹	LXXVI. (A, B, C, D, Btys.). ¹
LXXV. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ¹	LXI. (How.) A, B, C, D Btys. ¹

Field Coys. R.E. : 55, 75, 76.

Pioneers : 4/Coldstream Gds.

Mtd. Troops : Sqdn. Household Cavalry. Cyclist Coy.

12TH (EASTERN) DIVISION ^a : Major-Gen. F. D. V. Wing.

35th Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. H. C. van Straubenzee.

7/Norfolk.	9/Essex.
7/Suffolk.	5/R. Berkshire.

36th Brigade : Br.-Gen. H. B. Borradaile.

8/Royal Fus.	7/R. Sussex.
9/Royal Fus.	11/Middlesex.

37th Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. A. Fowler.

6/Queen's.	7/E. Surrey.
6/Buffs.	6/R. West Kent.

R.F.A. Bdes.

LXII. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ¹	LXIV. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ¹
LXIII. (A, B, C, D Btys.). ¹	LXV. (How.) A, B, D Btys. ¹

Field Coys. R.E. : 69, 70, 87.

Pioneers : 5/Northamptonshire.

Mtd. Troops : H.Q., M.G. Section & A Sqdn. King Edward's Horse.
Cyclist Coy.

9th Motor M.G. Bty.

21ST DIVISION : Major-Gen. G. T. Forestier-Walker.

62nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. E. B. Wilkinson.

12/Northumberland Fus.	8/E. Yorkshire.
13/Northumberland Fus.	10/Green Howards.

63rd Brigade : Br.-Gen. N. T. Nickalls.

8/Lincolnshire.	12/W. Yorkshire.
8/Somerset L.I.	10/York & Lancaster.

64th Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. M. Gloster.

9/K.O.Y.L.I.	14/Durham L.I.
10/K.O.Y.L.I.	15/Durham L.I.

¹ 4-gun batteries.

² 12th and 46th Divisions (concentrated behind Loos battle front on 29th September and 3rd October respectively) replaced 21st and 24th Divisions in XI. Corps.

R.F.A. Bdes.XCIV. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹XCVI. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹XCV. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹XCVII. (How.) A, B, C, D Btys.¹**Field Coys. R.E.** : 97, 98, 126.**Pioneers** : 14/Northumberland Fus.**Mtd. Troops** : A Sqdn. S. Irish Horse.

Cyclist Coy.

24TH DIVISION : Major-Gen. Sir J. G. Ramsay, K.C.B.

71st Brigade : Br.-Gen. M. T. Shewen.

9/Norfolk.

8/Bedfordshire.

9/Suffolk.

11/Essex.

72nd Brigade : Br.-Gen. B. R. Mitford.

8/Queen's.

9/E. Surrey.

8/Buffs.

8/R. West Kent.

73rd Brigade : Br.-Gen. W. A. Oswald.

12/Royal Fus.

7/Northamptonshire.

9/R. Sussex.

13/Middlesex.

R.F.A. Bdes.CVI. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹CVIII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹CVII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).¹CIX. (How.) A, B, C, D Btys.¹**Field Coys. R.E.** : 103, 104, 129.**Pioneers** : 12/Sherwood Foresters.**Mtd. Troops** : A Sqdn. Glasgow Yeo.

Cyclist Coy.

46TH (NORTH MIDLAND) DIVISION (T.F.) : ²

Major-Gen. Hon. E. J. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley.

137th Brigade : Br.-Gen. E. Feetham.

1/5th S. Staffordshire.

1/5th N. Staffordshire.

1/6th S. Staffordshire.

1/6th N. Staffordshire.

138th Brigade : Br.-Gen. G. C. Kemp.

1/4th Lincolnshire.

1/4th Leicestershire.

1/5th Lincolnshire.

1/5th Leicestershire.

139th Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. T. Shipley.

1/5th Sherwood Foresters.

1/7th Sherwood Foresters.

1/6th Sherwood Foresters.

1/8th Sherwood Foresters.

R.F.A. Bdes.I. N. Midland (1, 2, 3 Lincs. Btys.).³III. N. Midland (4, 5, 6 Staffs. Btys.).³II. N. Midland (1, 2, 3 Staffs. Btys.).³IV. N. Midland (How.) 1 & 2 Derbyshire Btys.⁴**Field Coys. R.E.** : 1/1st, 1/2nd & 2/1st N. Midland.**Pioneers** : 1/1st Monmouthshire.**Mtd. Troops** : B Sqdn. Yorkshire Hrs. (Yeo.).

Cyclist Coy.

¹ 4-gun batteries.² 12th and 46th Divisions (concentrated behind Loos battle front on 29th September and 3rd October respectively) replaced 21st and 24th Divisions in XI. Corps.³ Battery = four 15-pdrs.⁴ Battery = four 5"-hows.

INDIAN CORPS

Commander	Lieut.-Gen. Sir C. A. Anderson, K.C.B.
Br.-General, General Staff	Br.-Gen. J. R. E. Charles, D.S.O.
D.A. and Q.M.G.	Br.-Gen. A. W. Peck.
Br.-General, Royal Artillery	Br.-Gen. R. St. C. Lecky, C.B., D.S.O.
Chief Engineer	Br.-Gen. H. C. Nanton, C.B.

19TH (WESTERN) DIVISION : Major-Gen. C. G. M. Fasken.

56th Brigade : Br.-Gen. B. G. Lewis.

7/King's Own.

7/S. Lancashire.

7/E. Lancashire.

7/L. N. Lancs.

57th Brigade¹ : Br.-Gen. L. T. C. Twyford.

10/R. Warwickshire.

10/Worcestershire.

8/Gloucestershire.

8/N. Staffordshire.

58th Brigade : Br.-Gen. D. M. Stuart.

9/Cheshire.

9/Welch.

9/R. Welch Fus.

6/Wiltshire.

R.F.A. Bdes.

LXXXVI. (A, B, C, D Btys.).³ LXXXVIII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).²

LXXXVII. (A, B, C, D Btys.).² LXXXIX. (How.) A, C, D Btys.³

Field Coys. R.E. : 81, 82, 94.

Pioneers : 5/S.W.B.

Mid. Troops : C Sqdn. Yorks. Dragoons (Yeo.).

Cyclist Coy.

18th Motor M.G. Bty.

LAHORE DIVISION : Major-Gen. H. D'U. Keary.

Ferozepore Brigade : Br.-Gen. R. G. Egerton.

Connaught Rangers. 89th Punjabis.

1/4th London (T.F.).

57th Wilde's Rifles. 129th Baluchis.

Jullundur Brigade : Br.-Gen. E. P. Strickland.

1/Manchester.

47th Sikhs.

1/4th Suffolk (T.F.).

40th Pathans.

59th Scinde Rifles.

Sirhind Brigade : Br.-Gen. W. G. Walker, V.C.

1/Highland L.I.

1/1st Gurkhas.

27th Punjabis.

4/King's (S.R.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

V. (64, 73, 81 Btys.).

XVIII. (59, 93, 94 Btys.).

XI. (83, 84, 85 Btys.).

60th Bty. of XLIV. (How.) Bde.

Engineers : 20 & 21 Coys. 3rd Sappers & Miners.

Pioneers : 84th Sikh Pioneers.

Mid. Troops : 15th Lancers.

MEERUT DIVISION : Major-Gen. C. W. Jacob.

Dehra Dun Brigade : Br.-Gen. W. J. St. J. Harvey.

1/Seaforths.

2/2nd Gurkhas.

1/4th Seaforth (T.F.).

93rd Burma Infy. 1/9th Gurkhas.

¹ In Army reserve at beginning of battle.

² 4-gun batteries.

Garhwal Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. G. Blackader.

2/Leicestershire. 2/3rd Gurkhas. 1/3rd London (T.F.).
39th Garhwalis. 2/8th Gurkhas.

Bareilly Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. E. de M. Norie.

2/Black Watch. 58th Vaughan's Rifles. 1/4th Black Watch
33rd Punjabis. 69th Punjabis. (T.F.).

R.F.A. Bdes.

IV. (7, 14, 66 Btys.).

XIII. (2, 8, 44 Btys.).

IX. (19, 20, 28 Btys.).

61st Bty. of VIII. (How.) Bde.

Engineers : 3 & 4 Coys. 1st Sappers & Miners.

Pioneers : 107th Pioneers.

Mid. Troops : 4th Cavalry.

3RD CAVALRY DIVISION : Major-Gen. C. J. Briggs.

6th Cavalry Brigade : Br.-Gen. D. G. M. Campbell.

3/Dragoon Guards. 1/Royal Dragoons. N. Somerset Yeo.

7th Cavalry Brigade : Br.-Gen. A. A. Kennedy.

1/Life Guards. 2/Life Guards. Leicester Yeo.

8th Cavalry Brigade : Br.-Gen. C. B. Bulkeley-Johnson.

Royal Horse Guards. 10/Hussars. Essex Yeo.

R.H.A. Bde. : IV. (C, G, K Btys.).

Field Sqdn. R.E. : No. 3.

ROYAL FLYING CORPS.

Headquarters : No. 12 Squadron.

1st Wing : Lieut.-Colonel E. B. Ashmore.

Nos. 2, 3, 10, 16 Squadrons.

Nos. 6, 8 Kite Balloon Sections (R.N.A.S.).

2nd Wing : Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Salmond.

Nos. 1, 5, 6, 7 Squadrons.

Nos. 2, 4 Kite Balloon Sections (R.N.A.S.).

3rd Wing : Lieut.-Colonel W. S. Brancker.

Nos. 4, 8, 11 Squadrons.

Total : 161 aeroplanes ; 4 kite balloons.

Le Général adjoint
au Commandant en Chef.

6th April 1915.

Etat Major 3e Bureau.
S.C./460.

SECRET NOTE¹

FOR

FIELD-MARSHAL C.-IN-C. BRITISH FORCES

In the last days of April, the French Tenth Army, acting in **Sketch 2**, concert with the British First Army, will undertake an important attack north of Arras with a view to piercing the enemy's line. In order to carry out this attack, the Tenth Army will be strongly reinforced—it will consist of 14 infantry divisions (exclusive of Territorial divisions) and about 220 heavy guns and more than 720 field guns and howitzers.

The attack will be carried out in the manner described below :—

I. THE OBJECT.

To seize the heights 140—132 [Vimy ridge].

These heights command, at a distance, the region of Douai and place that area under gun fire. By their commanding position and by the formation of the country they overlook they make it impossible for the enemy to construct fresh works of defence and therefore the occupation of these heights will, without doubt, have a great effect and carry with it the breaking of the enemy's line.

II. THE PLAN.

A. The attack will include :—

1. A principal attack starting from the line—Hill 124 (S. of Carency)—Berthondal [Farm 2 m. West of Neuville St. Vaast]—Ecurie—Roclincourt, with the object of seizing the crest 119—140—132 [Ridge just east of Souchez], Southern spur of Farbus (a front of 6½ kilometres).

This attack will be supported by :—

2. A flank attack on the north, which has for objective, on its right, the occupation of the crest of Notre Dame de Lorette and the spur north of Souchez, then Hill 119, with a view to assist the principal attack by converging movement and cross fire which will become possible on the heights 119—140,—and, on its left, the capture of Loos and of the heights on the west and south of Pont-a-Vendin.

3. A flank attack on the south directed on Points 96 (1,500 metres west of Bailleul)—93 (Point du Jour).

This attack will cover the principal attack, and allow this latter to move forward on the whole of its front without its running the risk of becoming contracted, and also, later on, will allow it to maintain

¹ Translation in G.H.Q. files.

its full frontage. This attack will extend its action, on its right, as far as the Scarpe, and it will be supported by a powerful artillery, firing on the enemy's guns established in the valley of the Scarpe and further to the south.

B. These attacks, in so far as timing is concerned, will be opened as follows :—

1. Flank attack on the north.

This attack will precede the principal attack, because of the difficulty of the latter attack pushing on on account of lateral difficulties ; and also because of the importance, already referred to, of possessing Notre Dame de Lorette ; and lastly because this attack on the north can succeed with its own troops.

This attack will be carried out by the XXI. Corps.

2. Principal attack, and flank attack on the south.

These two attacks will open at the same time.

III. PREPARATION.

These attacks will be prepared by an artillery attack principally of heavy guns—slow, methodical, and prolonged, with the object of disorganizing the principal obstacles of the enemy, and as a consequence destroying his moral ; then after this bombardment there will follow a short and violent artillery fire principally by field guns.

A group of heavy guns placed in the vicinity of Vermelles will support the right of the British attack towards La Bassée as well as the left of the Tenth Army.

IV. EXECUTION.

The method of execution will be such as to make the most of, and to extend the area of, the destruction of works as well as destruction of moral which can only be obtained by a preparation pushed with the utmost vigour.

In principle, all relief of troops (or replacement of troops) will be avoided, and the execution of the plan will be such as to enable the attack to go right through using only its own immediate supports.

APPENDIX 5.

O.A.M. 74.

Sketch 3. 1. The First Army will take the offensive on the 8th May. Its mission is to break through the enemy's lines on its front and gain the La Bassée—Lille road between La Bassée and Fournes.

Its further advance will be directed on the line Bauvin—Don.

2. The Cavalry Corps, Indian Cavalry Corps, Canadian Division, Highland Division (less 1 Brigade R.F.A.) and Northumbrian Division will be in General Reserve at the disposal of the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, and will be ready to move at 2 hours notice from receipt of orders by Divisions.

3. The Cavalry Corps (less 1st Cavalry Division) will be prepared to move to rendezvous about Forêt de Nieppe, 1st Cavalry Division to rendezvous about Godewaersvelde, Indian Cavalry to rendezvous about Le Marequet on receipt of orders.

4. Advanced G.H.Q. will be at Hazebrouck.

W. R. ROBERTSON,
Lieut.-General,
Chief of the General Staff.

Advanced G.H.Q.
Hazebrouck.
4th May 1915.

APPENDIX 6.

1ST ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 22

AIRE.
6th May, 1915.

1. (a) The 1st Army will advance on 8th May and operate so as to **Map 2.** break through the enemy's line and gain the La Bassée—Lille **Sketch 3.** road between La Bassée and Fournes.

Its further advance will be directed on the line Bauvin—Don.

(b) Two Cavalry Corps and three infantry divisions are being held in readiness, as a General Reserve under the orders of the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, to exploit any success.

2. (a) The artillery, disposed in accordance with special instructions which have been issued, will complete such registration as may be necessary by 5 A.M., at which hour the preliminary bombardment will commence.

At 5-40 A.M. the infantry assaults will be carried out simultaneously at all points. All troops holding the line will at the same time co-operate by a vigorous fire attack along their entire front.

(b) The 1st Corps, maintaining its right at Givenchy, will attack from its breastworks in the vicinity of Richebourg L'Avoué in accordance with instructions already issued, and advance on Rue du Marais—Illies.

(c) The Indian Corps (less 1st Highland Division¹) will attack from its breastworks in the vicinity of Rue du Bois in accordance with instructions already issued. It will operate so as to cover the left of the 1st Corps, and will capture the Distillery and the Ferme du Biez.

Its subsequent advance will be directed on Ligny le Grand—La Cliqueterie Farm.

The Ferme du Biez—Ligny le Petit—Ligny le Grand road inclusive is assigned to the Indian Corps.

¹ Renamed 51st (Highland) Division on 11th May 1915.

(d) The 4th Corps will operate so as to break through the enemy's line in the vicinity of Rouges Bancs, in accordance with instructions already issued, with the object of :—

- (1) Organizing a defensive flank from vicinity of La Cordonnerie Farm to Fromelles and
 - (2) Turning the Aubers defences by an attack from the North-East and effecting a junction with the Indian Corps in the direction of La Cliqueterie Farm.
3. The 1st Highland Division (less 1 Bde. R.F.A.) will be in General Reserve at disposal of the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief.
 4. The 1st and 4th Corps will each detail one infantry brigade as Army Reserve under the orders of G.O.C. 1st Army.
 5. Advanced 1st A.H.Q. will be established at Merville at 3 P.M. on 7th May.

R. BUTLER,
Brigadier-General,
General Staff, 1st Army.

Issued at 10 P.M.

APPENDIX 7.

I. CORPS OPERATION ORDER No. 79

7th May 1915.

Maps 2, 1. The First Army will advance to-morrow with the object of breaking through the enemy's line and gaining the La Bassée—Sketch 4. Lille road between La Bassée and Fournes.

Its further advance will be directed on the line Bauvin—Don.

Two Cavalry Corps and three divisions are being held in readiness as a general reserve under the orders of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief to exploit any success.

2. The I. Corps is to attack from the Rue du Bois and advance on Rue du Marais—Illies, maintaining its right at Givenchy and Cuinchy.

3. The Indian Corps is to attack on the left of the I. Corps and is to capture the Distillery and the Ferme du Biez. Its subsequent advance will be directed on Ligny le Grand—La Cliqueterie Farm.

The road Ferme du Biez—Ligny le Petit—Ligny le Grand is assigned to the Indian Corps.

4. The 1st Division will attack from its breastworks in front of the Rue du Bois.

Its first objectives are :—

Hostile trenches P.8—P.10, the road junction P.15, and the road thence to La Tourelle.

Its subsequent advance will be directed on Rue du Marais—Lorgies, a defensive flank being organized from P.4 by La Quinque Rue to Rue du Marais.

Touch will be maintained with the Indian Corps throughout.

5. The infantry under G.O.C. London Division holding the defensive front north of Festubert will be prepared to relieve the infantry of the 1st Division at P.4, La Quinque Rue, and Rue du Marais, when those points have been secured, and to take advantage of any weakening of the enemy about the Rue d'Ouvert to occupy that locality.

6. The 2nd Division (less 4th Guards Brigade), with Motor Machine Gun Battery attached, will be in Corps Reserve in the area Loigne—Le Touret—Le Hamel in readiness to continue the advance. The troops of 1st Division must be clear of above area by 3.30 A.M.

7. The 5th London Brigade¹ will be in First Army Reserve, about Essars and Les Choquaux [1 mile S.W. of Locon], from 5 A.M.

8. The 1st Battn. Queen's Regt. (less two companies) will be under the direct orders of the Corps Commander north of Béthune.

9. The artillery will complete such registration as may be necessary by 5 A.M. at which hour the preliminary bombardment will begin in accordance with special instructions already issued as to times and objectives.

G.O.C. London Division will arrange for wire-cutting batteries and machine guns to open fire on enemy's wire opposite Festubert and Cuinchy at 4.45 A.M.

10. At 5.40 A.M. the infantry of the 1st Division will assault. The troops under G.O.C. London Division will at the same time open a vigorous fire attack along their entire front.

11. Advanced I. Corps H.Q. will be established at W 30.a.7.8. [on the Locon road 1½ miles from Béthune] at 4 P.M. to-day.

R. WHIGHAM, Br.-General,
General Staff, I. Corps.

Issued at 11.30 A.M.

APPENDIX 8.

1ST DIVISION ORDER No. 81

7th May 1915.

1. The First Army is attacking on the 8th May 1915, with the **Maps 2**, object of breaking through the enemy's line and gaining the La Bassée **3**.—Lille road between La Bassée and Fournes, and then advancing to **Sketch 4**. the line Bauvin—Don.

The 2nd London Division² will continue to hold the trenches on our right. The Indian Corps will attack on our left with the object of gaining the Distillery and the Fme. de Biez and then moving east-

¹ 141st Brigade.

² 47th Division.

wards. The 2nd Division is in Corps Reserve. A Cavalry Corps and three divisions are in Army reserve all ready to follow up our success.

2. The Major-General intends on 8th May to assault the enemy's line from Q.2 on the right to a point opposite the S.W. corner of the Orchard Redoubt on the left, to clear the enemy's trenches on our right flank as far as P.4 inclusive, to gain the line P.4—M.10—M.25—cross roads at N.30—M.32—P.38—R.27.

3. The attack will be carried out by the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades, with the 1st Guards Brigade in divisional reserve.

4. (a) The 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades will relieve the 1st Guards Brigade in Sub-Sections D.2 and D.8 [assault frontage of Division] on the evening of 7th May, under arrangements to be made between the Brigadiers concerned. No troops of the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades are to be east of the road running from x.5.d.3.4 to x.17.c.5.8. (King's Road) [parallel to Le Touret—Lacouture road and 1000 yards E. of it] before 8 p.m. The Le Touret—Rue du Bois road will be available for this movement.

(b) The 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades will form up for the attack in the entrenchments near the Rue du Bois as shown in the sketch already issued to Infantry Brigade Commanders and to the C.R.E. : the 2nd Infantry Brigade on the right from Chocolat Menier Corner to the Cinder Track exclusive ; the 3rd Brigade on the left from the Cinder Track inclusive to the Orchard Redoubt exclusive.

(c) Each brigade will attack with two battalions in first line ; with one battalion in 2nd line to clear the enemy's trenches of prisoners, to secure the flank, and then to follow in support of the first line ; and with two battalions in brigade reserve. The 2nd Infantry Brigade will also send one battalion in 2nd line to work down, and to clear the enemy's trenches from Chocolat Menier Corner southwards to P.8.

The 2nd Infantry Brigade will maintain communication with the London Division troops on the right.

The 3rd Infantry Brigade will keep touch with the Meerut Division troops on the left.

(d) The first objective will be the line P.8—P.10—P.14—P.15—Q.14—R.14 : the 2nd Infantry Brigade taking from P.8 to the road junction Q.12 both inclusive ; the 3rd Infantry Brigade taking from the road junction Q.12 exclusive to R.14 inclusive. This line will at once be entrenched, and strong points will be established, by the 2nd Infantry Brigade at P.8 and at Fme. Cour d'Avoine [d'Avoué] (Q. 10), and by the 3rd Infantry Brigade at Fme. du Bois (R.8).

The dividing line between brigades during the advance to the first objective will be the Cinder Track. The Cinder Track and the Fme. du Bois will be included in the 3rd Brigade front.

(e) The battalions in brigade reserve, supported by any troops which can be collected later, will pass through the front line and gain the second objective, namely, the line P.4—M.10—Rue du Marais—M.25—M.30—N.30—Lorgies—Q.31—R.27 : the 2nd Brigade taking from P.4 to the road junction at M.25 both inclusive, and the 3rd Brigade from M.25 exclusive to R.27 inclusive.

Strong points in this line will be established by the 2nd Brigade

at the Orchard and buildings between N.12 and M.9, at M.15, at M.19, and at M.25 ; by the 3rd Brigade at the cross roads at N.30, at the cross roads at P.36, and in the enclosures N.E. of Lorgies village about P.34.

(f) The dividing line between brigades during the advance to the second objective will be the road or track Q.12—P.18—M.20—M.25. This road and the buildings just south of P.18 will be included in the front of the 2nd Brigade.

The Fme. de Toulotte will be included in the front of the 3rd Brigade.

(g) Troops of the London Division will be prepared to relieve the troops of the 1st Division at P.4, at La Quinque Rue, and at the Rue du Marais, when these points have been secured.

5. The 1st Guards Brigade will be in Divisional Reserve in localities already indicated south of Richebourg St. Vaast. The Brigade will move up into the breastworks S. and N. of the Rue du Bois as soon as any part of them has been vacated by the 2nd and 3rd Brigades.

6. The following troops will be attached to Infantry Brigades :

<i>Throughout.</i>	<i>After capture of 1st Objective.</i>
2nd Brigade : 1 Troop Northumberland Yeomanry.	25th Brigade R.F.A.
10 cyclists, Div. Cyclist Coy.	2 Sections 4.5 Hows.
1 Section No. 7 Mountain Battery R.A.	
1 Section 4" Mortars.	
1 Section 1½" Mortars.	
Lowland Fd. Co. R.E. (less 1 section).	
3rd Brigade : 1 Troop Northumberland Yeomanry.	39th Brigade R.F.A.
10 cyclists, Div. Cyclist Co.	2 Sections 4.5 Hows.
1 Section No. 7 Mountain Battery R.A.	
1 Section 4" Mortars.	
1 Section 1½" Mortars.	
23rd Fd. Co. R.E. (less 1 section)	
1st Brigade : 1 Troop Northumberland Yeomanry.	
10 cyclists, Divl. Cyclist Co.	
1 Section, 26th Fd. Co. R.E.	

When the 1st Guards Brigade is given its objective, the 26th Brigade R.F.A. will be transferred to the G.O.C. 1st Brigade.

7. One section Lowland Field Company R.E., with 2 platoons

infantry to be detailed by the G.O.C. 2nd Infantry Brigade, will follow immediately behind the Brigade Reserve of the 2nd Infantry Brigade to clear existing tracks, and to make new roads.

One section 23rd Field Company R.E., with 2 platoons infantry to be detailed by the G.O.C. 3rd Infantry Brigade, will follow the 3rd Brigade for a similar purpose.

8. The Divisional Mounted Troops will be at the division report centre at La Coutre [Lacouture].

9. The following are the arrangements for the attack :—

12 midnight. All troops to be in position as detailed in para. 4 (b) and in para. 5.

5 A.M. Artillery complete registration, open deliberate bombardment of enemy's position, and cut his wire.

5.30 A.M. Intense bombardment of enemy's trenches. The assaulting platoons will deploy under cover of the bombardment 80 yards from the enemy's front line of breastworks.

5.40 A.M. The infantry assault. Artillery lift fire from enemy's front line of trenches to localities in rear, and form a barrage on the right flank.
1st Guards Brigade will move up to our first line breastworks.

After the intense bombardment all guns lift their fire to localities in the vicinity of the line of the first objective. At 6.15 A.M. they will lift again from this line, and will then bombard localities in the vicinity of the line of the 2nd objective until 6.45 A.M. Arrangements have been made for more lengthy bombardments if required by the infantry situation.

10. Flags, 3 feet square, with a white vertical bar on a red ground, will be issued to infantry brigades at the rate of six for each battalion. These flags will be used as follows :—

(a) By the battalion of the 2nd Brigade which is to clear the enemy's trenches southwards from Chocolat Menier Corner, to mark the position of the most advanced troops.

(b) By the remainder of the attacking troops to mark any of the objectives named in this order as they are captured.
In every case the flags will be screened as far as possible from the enemy.

11. Royal Engineer Depots will be established.

Advanced Depots. One in each Brigade area near the Rue du Bois.

Main Depot. x.5.c.8.9 [Lacouture].

A moveable depot, packed on pontoon wagons, will be located at the Main Depot.

12. S.A.A. Depots will be established at s.9.a.5.7 [on road $\frac{1}{2}$ mile N.W. of Richebourg L'Avoué] and at s.8.d.8.3 [on road $\frac{1}{2}$ mile W. of Richebourg l'Avoué]. Each Depot will contain 64,000 rounds S.A.A. in boxes, 500 hand grenades, and 200 rifle grenades.

13. 1st Line Transport will be parked in two Echelons. 1st Echelon $\frac{1}{2}$ mile N. of Le Touret.

Brigade tool wagons	} For each Battalion, except 1st Brigade S.A.A. Carts which will be in Brigade Ammunition Reserve in S.7.b. [About $\frac{1}{2}$ mile S.W. of Richebourg St. Vaast].
Two tool carts	
Two S.A.A. carts	
Two machine gun limbers	
Maltese Cart.	

2nd Echelon at Mesplaux [1 mile W. of Le Touret].

Remainder 1st Line Transport, less 1 water cart at First Aid Post.

Two wagons for each battalion.

14. No. 1 Field Ambulance will be at Locon (Bearer Division) and Hinges (Tent Division) ready to move.

No. 2 Field Ambulance will open at Ecole des Jeunes Filles, Béthune, and will establish a collecting station for walking cases at Le Touret cross roads.

No. 3 Field Ambulance will remain open at Paul Bert School, Béthune, and will establish a collecting station for walking cases at the junction of King George's Road and King's Road, x.5.d.3.4. [$\frac{1}{2}$ mile S.E. of Lacouture].

15. The Mobile Veterinary Section will establish a collecting station near the R.E. Main Depot for casualties east of the line La Couture—Le Touret. Casualties west of that line will be taken to the collecting station in Locon.

16. One day's rations and the iron ration will be carried on the man.

17. Every man will carry at least 1 sandbag, and a muffler or respirator as a precaution against gas. Shortly before the troops advance the mufflers or respirators should be damped with the solution provided for the purpose in each line of breastworks.

18. No copy of this order is to be carried by anyone taking part in the attack.

19. 1st Division Report Centre (Advanced 1st Division) will be at Lacouture from 10 P.M. 7th May.

1st Division Observing Station and G.O.C.'s Battle Station will be in the Rue du Bois.

G. F. BOYD, Bt. Lieut.-Colonel,
General Staff, 1st Division.

Issued at 4.45 P.M.

APPENDIX 9.

1st Army, General Staff.
No. G.S. 82 (a)

1. The instructions contained in G.S. 82 (a) dated the 10th inst., Map 5. [not reproduced] in so far as they relate to details of future operations, Sketch 6. are cancelled.

2. The general plan of the main attack will be as follows :—

- (i) To continue pressing forward towards Violaines and Beau Puits, establish a defensive flank along the La Bassée road on the left and maintaining the right at Givenchy.

- (ii) The line to be established in the first instance if possible on the general line of the road Festubert—La Quinque Rue—La Tourelle cross roads—Port Arthur. This position to be consolidated and the troops reformed and communication established.
 - (iii) Whilst this line is being established, a general bombardment on the whole front will continue with a special bombardment of the next objectives viz. :—Rue d'Ouvert—Rue Du Marais. When ready a fresh advance will be ordered on these objectives.
3. The main attack will be carried out by the 1st and Indian Corps as follows :—

- (a) The Indian Corps to assault the German front system of trenches between the ditches running S.S.E. to N.N.W. through points V.6 and V.5—Secure the German second line trench and point V.6 and establish a flank at this point connecting with our present line.

The assault to be delivered at 11.30 P.M. on the 14th May simultaneously with that of the 2nd Division.

As opportunity offers the Indian Corps will attack outwards towards the line points V.5.E—V.6.E—59 and, having secured that, will, as the attack of the 2nd Division progresses, push on and secure the road from Port Arthur to La Tourelle cross roads inclusive.

- (b) (i) The 1st Corps to assault with 2nd Division, the German front system of trenches between point R.1 and the right of the Indian Corps. Secure the line R.1—R.3—R.5—R.7—V.4 by night and at 8.15 A.M. push on simultaneously with the attack of 7th Division, and secure the Ferme Cour d'Avoué and the line of the road from P.14 to R.13.

The assault to take place at 11.30 P.M. on 14th May.

- (ii) To assault with 7th Division the German front system of trenches on the front N.1—P.5.

The objective will be to secure the enemy's front system of trenches and push on and secure the line of the road from M.3 to P.14.

The assault to take place at 3.15 A.M. on 15th May.

4. In the case of the attacks by Indian Corps and 2nd Division the deliberate bombardment will continue up to the time of assault and then lift clear of the actual portion of the line to be assaulted.

In the case of the attack by 7th Division, the assault will be preceded by a short intensive bombardment.

13th May, 1915.

R. BUTLER, Brigadier-General,
General Staff, 1st Army

APPENDIX 10.

I. CORPS OPERATION ORDER No. 83

14th May, 1915.

1. The First Army will resume its offensive tonight.
2. Its object is to press forward to Violaines and Beau Puits, Map 5, establishing a defensive flank on the La Bassée—Estaires road on Sketch 6. the left and maintaining the right at Givenchy.
3. The main attack will be carried out by the I. and Indian Corps.
4. The first objective is the general line of the road Festubert—La Quinque Rue—La Tourelle—Port Arthur. This position is to be consolidated when won.
5. The task of the I. Corps (2nd and 7th Divisions) is to secure the line of the road Festubert—La Tourelle from Points M.3 to R.13.
6. The Indian Corps is to assault the German front system of trenches between the ditches running S.S.E. to N.N.W. through Points V.5 and V.6, secure the German second line breastwork and Point V.6, and establish a flank at this point connecting with our present line.

This assault is to be delivered at 11.30 P.M. tonight simultaneously with that of 2nd Division.

As opportunity offers the Indian Corps will subsequently attack outwards towards the line Points V.5.E—V.6.E—59, and having secured that, will push on and secure the road from Port Arthur to La Tourelle, as the attack of the 2nd Division progresses.

7. To carry out the task of the I. Corps :—

(a) The 2nd Division will assault the German front system of trenches between Point R.1 and the right of the Indian Corps and secure the line R.1—R.3—R.5—R.7—V.4 under cover of darkness.

This assault will be delivered at 11.30 P.M. tonight in close touch with the assault of the Indian Corps.

At 3.15 A.M. tomorrow the 2nd Division will continue to press its attack simultaneously with that of the 7th Division and secure the Ferme Cour d'Avoué and the line of the Festubert—La Tourelle road from Points P.14 to R.13 both inclusive.

(b) The 7th Division will assault the German position on the front Points N.1—P.5 at 3.15 A.M. tomorrow.

First objective :—the enemy's front system of trenches.

Second objective :—the line of the road from Points M.3 to P.14 at which point close touch is to be established with 2nd Division.

8. Under the direction of the Divisional Commanders concerned, a deliberate bombardment of the enemy's positions will be maintained throughout today and tonight up to the hours fixed respectively for the assaults of 2nd and 7th Divisions, in accordance with instructions already issued. Fire will then be lifted clear of the actual portions of the hostile line to be assaulted.

The 1st Group, H.A.R., will also take part in this bombardment in accordance with a programme arranged under the supervision of the M.G.R.A., 1st Army, which has been communicated to divisions.

9. (a) The 4th (Guards) Brigade will form the Corps Reserve in readiness to move at short notice from 11.30 P.M. tonight.

(b) The 1st Bn. Queen's Regt. will be under the direct orders of the Corps Commander in its billets and in readiness to move at one hour's notice from 8 A.M. tomorrow. Horses of the baggage and supply wagons of this battalion need not be harnessed.

R. WHIGHAM, Brig. General,

Issued at 1 P.M.

General Staff, 1st Corps.

APPENDIX 11.

2ND DIVISION INSTRUCTIONS

Map 5. 1. [This paragraph deals with Artillery Instructions.]

2. Infantry Attack.

The infantry attacks will be delivered by the 6th and 5th Infantry Brigades.

Frontage.

6th Infantry Brigade—From R.1 to the bend in the German line between R.6 and V.1 (inclusive).

5th Infantry Brigade—From that point (exclusive) to the north west corner of the salient between V.3 and V.6.

1st Objective.

6th Infantry Brigade—The first and second line of German parapets between R.1 and R.7 (exclusive). R.1 to Q.2 to be blocked.

5th Infantry Brigade—The first and second line of German parapets from R.7 (inclusive) to a point N.W. of V.5 and to get into touch with the Meerut Division at that point.

Arrangements for assembling the attacking and supporting columns must be carefully thought out and arranged.

Every endeavour will be made to render the attack a surprise.

The attacking line should be deployed in good time in front of the breastwork and in front of any obstacle which exists close to the breastwork.

The maintenance of the correct direction of the attack is very important. Portions of the German trenches in front of which it is known that the wire is adequately destroyed should be selected, and every precaution taken by aid of compass bearings, landmarks, etc. to lead directly towards them.

The advance should be made in absolute silence and at a walk till close to the German line where a rush will be made and the enemy cleared out with bombs and the bayonet.

The supporting line should follow close on the attacking line in order to reinforce it and give it impetus to carry it on to the second line of breastworks. The 3rd and 4th lines will bring the necessary tools and will be accompanied by R.E. to convert both the German 1st and 2nd line breastworks for our use, and to consolidate the position gained as rapidly as possible.

It is very important that the leading lines when successful, are adequately supported without delay and reinforcements sent out as required, by driblets if necessary.

Parties will be detailed at once to commence digging and preparing communicating trenches.

The distribution of the R.E. will be as usual, three men accompanying the leading troops to search for mines.

A further advance will not be made till 3.15 A.M.

Flanks will be secured by demolishing a few traverses and utilizing the material to form a barrier. This will leave a space which can be denied to the Germans by bombing. Care must be taken to avoid bombing the men of the Meerut Division attacking on our left.

As soon as the position is established, machine guns and trench mortars will be brought up.

Rations will be carried as usual and it is important that water bottles should be full.

Communications by wire, and visual signalling will be established.

Bangalore torpedoes have been issued for the destruction of any unexpected wire.

Cutting tools such as axes, billhooks, etc. should be carried, as hedges may require to be dealt with.

3. At 3.15 A.M. the advance will be commenced on the objectives detailed, in ordinary battle formation, scouts being thrown well forward and patrols being pushed to the flanks to obtain touch with the 7th Division, and with the Meerut Division if this has not already been gained.

4. It is stated that on 9th May the infantry attacks were incorrectly timed because officers did not trust their watches and imagined that they could tell when the moment of attack had come by the lifting of the artillery fire.

It must be strongly impressed on all ranks that no change in the fire of our artillery will be apparent either to the ear or to the eye when the moment comes for the assault. The attack to be simultaneous must start absolutely punctually at the hour named, and although the infantry cannot perceive it, the artillery range will also be lengthened at that hour.

A staff officer will visit R.A. and Brigade H.Q. during the afternoon to give the exact time.

LOUIS VAUGHAN, Lieut.-Colonel,
S.G.S.O., 2nd Division.

Issued at 9.30 P.M.
13th May, 1915.

APPENDIX 12.

2ND DIVISION OPERATION ORDER No. 41

15th May, 1915.

Maps 1, 5. 1. The First Army is resuming its offensive to-night, with the object of pressing forward to Violaines and Beau Puits, and establishing a defensive flank on the La Bassée—Estaires Road on the left while maintaining the right at Givenchy. The task of the I. Corps (2nd and 7th Divisions) is to secure the line of the road Festubert—La Tourelle from Points M.3 to R.13, and to consolidate that line.

Sketch 6. 2. The Indian Corps is to assault the German front system of trenches between the ditches running S.S.E. to N.N.W. through points V.5 and V.6, secure the German second line breastwork and Point V.6, and establish a flank at this point connecting with our present line. This assault is to be delivered tonight simultaneously with that of the 2nd Division.

The Indian Corps is to push on and secure the road from Port Arthur and La Tourelle as the attack of the 2nd Division progresses.

3. The 7th Division is to assault the German position at 3.15 A.M. tomorrow on the front N.1—P.5 and is to push forward to the line of the road from Point M.3 to P. 14 and to establish there close touch with the 2nd Division.

4. The task of the 2nd Division is to assault the German front system of trenches between Point R.1 and the right of the Indian Corps and to secure the line R.1—R.3—R.5—R.7—V.4 under cover of darkness ; at 3.15 A.M. tomorrow to press its attack simultaneously with that of the 7th Division, to secure the Ferme Cour d'Avoué and the line of the Festubert—La Tourelle road from Points P.14 to R.13 both inclusive.

5. The assault will be carried out tonight at 11.30 P.M. by the 6th and 5th Infantry Brigades under arrangements already notified to all concerned. The assault will be delivered simultaneously with, and in close touch with the assault of the Indian Corps.

Frontage.

6th Infantry Brigade—From R. 1 to the bend in the German line between R.6 and V.1 (inclusive).

5th Infantry Brigade—From that point (exclusive) to the north-west corner of the salient between V.3 and V.6.

Objective.

6th Infantry Brigade—The first and second line of German parapets between R.1 and R.7 (exclusive). R.1 to Q.2 to be blocked.

5th Infantry Brigade—The first and second line of German parapets from R.7 (inclusive) to a point N.W. of V.5 and to get into touch with the Meerut Division at that point.

The position when gained will at once be consolidated.

6. At 3.15 A.M. tomorrow the attack will be pushed forward from the line consolidated, simultaneously with the attack of the 7th Division.

Objectives.

6th Infantry Brigade—To capture Ferme Cour d'Avoué ; to establish itself on the line P.14 to Q.12 both inclusive ; and to gain touch with the 7th Division, especially about P.14. The German communication trench, running S.E. to N.W. through Q.15 will be included in the 6th Inf. Brigade front.

5th Infantry Brigade—To capture Ferme du Bois ; to establish itself on the line Q.12 (exclusive)—R.13 (inclusive) ; and to maintain touch with the Indian Corps.

7. The night assault on 15th May and the advance on 16th May will be supported by the artillery of the 2nd Division and 1st Group, H.A.R. in accordance with instructions already issued to G.O.C. R.A.

8. The F.A. Brigades affiliated to Infantry Brigades, which will move forward in support of the infantry if required, are as follows :—

XLI. F.A. Brigade affiliated to 6th Infantry Brigade. Horses of one battery only to be parked near road past Mesplaux [1 mile W. of Le Touret], clear of the road, by 3.45 A.M. on 16th May ready to move forward via road junction X.10.c. [N. end of Le Touret] and Le Touret.

XXXIX. F.A. Brigade affiliated to 5th Infantry Brigade. Horses of one battery only to be parked near road through X.3.d. [1 m. N.W. of Le Touret] clear of the road, by 3.45 A.M. on 16th May ready to move forward via road junctions X.4.d. [just S.W. of Lacouture] and X.5.a.2.2. [S. end of Lacouture].

9. 4th (Guards) Brigade will be in Corps Reserve and will be in readiness, in their present area, to move at short notice from 11.30 P.M. tonight.

10. Divisional Mounted Troops, 1st Motor Machine Gun Battery and the armoured cars will remain in their present positions and will be ready to move forward from 3.30 A.M. 16th May. An officer from 1st Motor Machine Gun Battery to report at Adv. Divisional H.Q. at that hour.

11. All prisoners of war will be escorted to the Prisoners Depot at X.16.a.5.2. [just S.W. of Le Touret] and handed over to the O.C. Depot to whom separate instructions have been issued.

12. 2nd Division advanced report centre unchanged.

LOUIS VAUGHAN, Lieut.-Colonel,
S.G.S.O., 2nd Division.

Issued at 12.30 P.M.

APPENDIX 13.

7TH DIVISION OPERATION ORDER No. 11

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL H. DE LA P. GOUGH, C.B.,

Commanding 7th Division.

14th May, 1915.

Maps 1, 1. Information. The trench on the front we are about to attack
5. is held by the Prussian 7th Corps whose trenches we took at Neuve
Sketch 7. Chapelle.

The 55th Regiment is probably in our immediate front with the 15th Regiment on its right.

No reserves are known to be in the neighbourhood.

The newly formed 115th Division that was at Tournai is believed to have gone South to oppose the French advance, and there appear to be no other divisions which are available as immediate reinforcements.

2. Intention. The 1st Army will, during the night of the 14th/15th¹ May and on the morning of the 15th break the enemy's line on the front Festubert, Richebourg l'Avoué and establish itself approximately on the line Festubert—La Quinque Rue—Ferme de Toulotte—Richebourg l'Avoué.

The 2nd Division will break the enemy's front between R.1 and V.3 by an attack to be made at 11.30 p.m. on May 14th and establish itself in the enemy's front trenches during the hours of darkness, while simultaneously the Indian Corps will break the front between V.3 and V.6 and establish itself there.

The 7th Division will break the enemy's front N.1 and P.5 on the morning of May 15th.

The further advance of the 2nd and Indian Corps will be made simultaneously with the advance of the 7th Division after daylight.

3. General Plan. The 7th Division will be formed up during the night of the 14th/15th as laid down in special orders issued for that purpose, and will assault the enemy's line on the front N.1, P.5 at 3.15 a.m. on the 15th May.

This assault will be carried out in two columns.

The 22nd Infantry Brigade and 54th Field Coy. R.E. on the right will attack with its right on N.1 on a front of approximately 400 yards. The 20th Infantry Brigade and 55th Field Coy. R.E. on the left will attack with its left at P.5 on a front of approximately 350 yards.

As soon as the first line trenches have been occupied and consolidated, the advance will be continued to the line M.5, M.8, M.9,

¹ The date was subsequently changed to 15th/16th.

P.14, the 22nd Infantry Brigade moving on to the front M.5—M.9., the 20th Infantry Brigade to the front M.9—P.14. The 22nd and 20th Infantry Brigades will simultaneously extend their flanks to the right and left respectively by means of bombing parties.

When this line has been occupied it will be strengthened and organized for defence—reconnaissance should however be pushed on to the South and South-East, and if any tactical points further to the front can be occupied this should be done without delay.

No. 1 Mortar Battery is placed under the command of G.O.C. 22nd Infantry Brigade.

The section No. 7 Mountain Battery will be at the disposal of G.O.C. 20th Brigade.

The 21st Infantry Brigade will be in Reserve in the neighbourhood of the Rue de l'Épinette, with one Battalion as garrison of the trenches.

This latter battalion supported by 12 machine guns will maintain a heavy fire on the enemy's parapet from 2.45 A.M. to the moment of assault and will also prevent any repair being carried out on the enemy's parapet or wire during the night.

The remainder of the Division will be in Divisional Reserve at the positions laid down in Operation Order No. 12.

4. Artillery. The Artillery of the Division assisted by

<u>Batteries.</u>	<u>Unit.</u>
	IVth Corps Artillery.
2.	37th Howitzer Brigade, less 1 Battery. <u>Attached Artillery.</u>
3.	R.H.A. 1st Indian Cavalry Division.
2.	36th Bde. R.F.A. less 1 Battery.
1.	47th Howitzer Battery.
2.	8th Howitzer London Bde. R.F.A.
1.	12th London Battery R.F.A.
2.	7th Siege Brigade R.G.A.
1.	6th Siege Battery R.G.A.
	1 Section No. 7 Mountain Battery.
3.	French 75's. No. 1 Group, H.A.R.

will prepare the way for the attack by a deliberate bombardment commencing on May 13th and continuing from that day to the date of the attack. At 2.45 A.M. on May 15th the bombardment on the front to be attacked will increase in intensity till 3.15 A.M., at which hour it will lift on to the line M.5—M.9—P.14.

A barrage will be placed at 2.45 A.M. between M.3 and N.1 on the right of the attack and between P.6 and Q.4 on the left of the attack, and at 3.15 A.M. this barrage will increase in intensity to cover the flanks of the attack at the moment of the assault.

From 3.20 A.M. the barrage on the right should not extend further north than M.1, and that on the left further south than P.8, so as not to interfere with the assaulting Infantry.

At 3.35 A.M. the barrage will lift so as to allow the bombing parties mentioned in paragraph 3 to advance.

5. Dress and Equipment. Troops will wear packs and will carry cardigan jackets and waterproof sheets, but no greatcoat.

Greatcoats will be collected under Brigade arrangements.

Every man will carry 200 rounds of ammunition.

Every man will carry one day's rations besides the remainder of the current day's issue.

Every man will carry two empty sand bags.

6. Supplies. Depots of food and ammunition have been formed as follows :—

Food.

16,000 rations of preserved meat and biscuits at a house in X.18.c. [Rue du Bois, W. of Festubert road].

Ammunition.

R.E. Depot Rue de l'Epinette . . .	450,000 rounds.
Advanced R.E. Store Rue de l'Epinette	500,000 „
Head Qrs. 2nd Bedford Rue de l'Epinette	180,000 „
Head Qrs. 2nd Yorks. Rue du Bois . .	230,000 „

7. Transport. All 1st Line Transport not absolutely required will be parked clear of the road in X.21.c. [le Hamel] under the direction of an officer to be detailed by the 20th Brigade.

S.A.A. Carts, limbered wagons for machine guns, tool carts and R.E. technical wagons, will be formed up clear of the roads in X.15.c. and d, [between Rue du Bois and les Facons] under the orders of an officer to be detailed by the G.O.C. 21st Infantry Brigade.

8. Medical.

1. Advanced Dressing Stations. S.14.b. [W. of junction Rue des Berceaux road—Rue du Bois] and X.24.a. [S.W. of junction Festubert road—Rue du Bois.]

2. Divisional Collecting Stations. X.16.b.d. [N. & S. of Rue du Bois, E. of Le Touret road].

3. Field Ambulances :

23rd Field Ambulance at Ecole Maternelle, Béthune.

22nd Field Ambulance at Ecole de Jeunes Filles, Béthune.

21st Field Ambulance in Reserve (less 1 section, at Ecole Essars for reception of sick of Division during operations).

9. Prisoners. A Prisoner of War Collecting Station will be established at the road junction in X.16 Central [Road junctions S. of Le Touret]. An escort of 1 N.C.O. and 15 men per 100 prisoners is ample.

10. Lights. No lights or smoking will be permitted after the troops fall in to move to their places of assembly.

11. Road Traffic. A system of road control shown by boards must be strictly adhered to.

12. Flags. Each battalion must have at least one of the flags for marking their position mounted on a 9' pole. The 2nd Division are using yellow flags.

13. Brigade Ammunition Columns.

14th H.A. Brigade Ammunition Column Supplies 22nd Infantry Brigade	X.19.a.7.2. [Ecluse d'Essars].
22nd F.A. Brigade Ammunition Column Supplies 20th Infantry Brigade	X.14.a.7.7. [Enclosure W. of Mesplaux].
35th F.A. Brigade Ammunition Column Supplies 21st Infantry Brigade	X.20.b.6.1. [Junction, Les Glatignies road—Rue du Bois].

14. Headquarters. Divisional Headquarters will be at Cse. du Raux.

F. GATHORNE HARDY, Lieut.-Colonel,
General Staff, 7th Division.

APPENDIX 14. *(Translation)*

G.Q.G. des Armées de l'Est.

Headquarters

Etat-Major

14th September 1915

3rd Bureau8565

NOTE

FOR THE GENERAL OFFICERS COMMANDING
ARMY GROUPS

The dash and devotion of the troops are the principal factors which make for the success of attack. The French soldier fights the more bravely, the better he understands the importance of the action he is engaged in and the more confidence he has in the dispositions arranged by the Commander. It is therefore necessary for officers of all ranks to explain at once to their subordinates the favourable conditions for the opening of the next French offensive.

The following points should be known by all :—

1. It is necessary for us to take the offensive in the French theatre of operations so as to drive the Germans out of France. We will thus release our compatriots, who have been enslaved for twelve months, and we will tear away from the enemy the valuable prize he possesses in our invaded territory. Besides, a brilliant victory over the Germans will induce neutral countries to declare themselves for us and will compel the enemy to slacken his operations against the Russians so as to oppose our attacks.

2. Everything has been done so that this offensive may be carried out with large forces and powerful material. The strength of our first line of defences, which has constantly increased, the ever growing number of Territorials in the front line, the reinforcements disembarked in France for the British Army, have allowed the C. in C. to withdraw from the front, and to prepare for attack, a large number of complete divisions, equal in number to several Armies.

These forces, as well as those in the front line, are equipped with complete and modern war material. The number of machine-guns has been more than doubled; field guns, replaced gradually as they wear out by new guns, have in hand a large stock of munitions; motor convoys have been multiplied both for supply and for transport of troops.

The heavy artillery, the principal weapon of attack has been the object of a determined effort. A mass of large calibre batteries has been collected and organized for the forthcoming operations. The daily allowance of munitions foreseen for each gun surpasses the largest expenditure of the past.

3. The actual time is particularly favourable for a general offensive. Firstly the Kitchener Armies are just completing disembarkation in France; secondly, the Germans have carried out, even during the last month, reliefs of troops destined for the Russian front on our front. The Germans have only a very few reserves behind the thin line of their trenches.

4. The offensive will be general. It will comprise several large simultaneous attacks, carried out on very large fronts. The British troops will take part with large numbers, the Belgians will equally take part in the action. As soon as the enemy has been badly shaken, the troops holding the defensive portion of the front will attack in turn so as to complete the disorganization and to rout him.

It will be necessary for all attacking troops not only to seize the first enemy trenches, but to push on without respite, *day and night*, beyond the 2nd and 3rd line positions to the open country. All the Cavalry will take part in these attacks so as to capture the hostile batteries and to exploit the success a long way in front of the infantry.

The simultaneous attacks, their strength, and their extent will prevent the enemy from collecting reserves of infantry and artillery at the same point as he was able to do north of Arras. They are a certain guarantee of success.

The communication of these instructions to the troops will not fail to raise their moral and will make them ready to accept the sacrifices which will be asked of them. It is therefore necessary for it to be done with intelligence and conviction.

J. JOFFRE.

APPENDIX 15.

O.A.M. 818.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMANDERS OF ARMIES AND G.H.Q. RESERVE

- Maps 6, 1. The allies are about to assume the offensive with the object of :—
7. Sketches
16, 17.
- (i) Breaking the enemy's front.
 - (ii) Preventing him from re-establishing his line.
 - (iii) Defeating decisively his divided forces.

2. The offensive is to be carried out—

- (i) By the Fourth, Second, Third and Fifth French Armies east and west of Reims, in the direction of Sedan—Le Nouvion.
- (ii) By our First Army and the French Tenth Army north and south of Arras, in the direction of Le Quesnoy—Frasnes lez Buissenal [11 miles N.E. of Tournai].

3. The main attack of the First Army will be made on the general front Lens—La Bassée (both inclusive) in accordance with instructions already issued to the First Army Commander. The right of the attack of the French Tenth Army is to pass through FICHEUX, [5 miles SSW. of Arras] and the left immediately south of Lens.

4. Subsidiary attacks will be made by the First Army north of the La Bassée Canal and by the Second Army east of Ypres in accordance with instructions already issued to the First and Second Army Commanders respectively.

5. The Cavalry, Indian Cavalry, and XI. Corps will form the general reserve at the disposal of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief. Separate instructions will be issued for the concentration of these troops. The Second Army will keep one division in army reserve west of Bailleul to reinforce either the First or Second Army as the Commander-in-Chief may decide.

6. As soon as the enemy's front line is broken :—

- (i) The First Army will secure the crossings over the Haute Deule Canal from Courrières [6 miles ENE. of Lens] to Bauvin both inclusive.

The next objective of the First Army will be the general line Henin-Liétard—Carvin.

The dividing line between the First Army and the French Tenth Army is the Lens—Henin-Liétard—Fiers—Waziers—Lallaing road inclusive [*i.e.* a line passing just N. of Douai] to the First Army.

- (ii) The general mission of the Cavalry Corps will be to pursue the enemy and to prevent him from re-establishing connection between his forces north of the break and those to the south.

With these objects in view it will move through the First Army front and will secure the crossings over the Haute Deule Canal between Douai and Courrières, both inclusive, and then moving by the north side of Douai, seize the crossings over the Scheldt between Condé and Tournai (both inclusive) as quickly as possible, cutting the railways Valenciennes—Lille and Ath—Lille.

In carrying out its mission the Cavalry Corps will act, as far as possible, in close combination with General Conneau's cavalry corps of the French Tenth Army. The left of General Conneau's cavalry is to move in the direction of Condé—Le Quesnoy by Douai and to the south of that town.

Circumstances may require the Cavalry Corps and General Conneau's cavalry both to move through the front of the First Army, or both may be required to move through

the front of the French Tenth Army. In the former case General Conneau's cavalry will pass through the First Army by arrangement with the Commander of that Army, and in the latter case the Cavalry Corps Commander will make the necessary arrangements with the Commander of the French Tenth Army.

(iii) The Indian Cavalry Corps will be held in readiness to support the Cavalry Corps or the French Cavalry as the Commander-in-Chief may decide.

(iv) The Bus Companies of each Army will be placed under G.H.Q. control so as to be available to convey infantry forward to assist the cavalry if required.

7. The rôle of the Second Army will at first be to hold the enemy in its front, and to deceive him as to the direction of the main attack. It will be prepared, however, rapidly to take the offensive when the enemy retires, or to detach troops to follow up a success gained elsewhere.

8. The Third Army will assist with its artillery the right of the French Army attack in accordance with instructions already issued, and will be prepared to advance at once in co-operation with the French troops on its flanks in the event of the enemy retiring.

9. Once the enemy's defences have been pierced a situation must be created in which manœuvre will become possible, and to do this the offensive must be continued with the utmost determination directly to the front in the first instance. It must be impressed on Commanders that to delay the advance in order to work outwards to the flanks will give the enemy time to re-establish his front. The advance must be made in depth so that rapid manœuvre may be possible.

10. General Headquarters will be at St. Omer.

W. R. ROBERTSON, Lieut.-General,
Chief of the General Staff.

G.H.Q.

18th September 1915.

APPENDIX 16.

FIRST ARMY OPERATION ORDER No. 95

Hinges.
19th Sept. 1915.

Map 7: 1. (a) In conformity with the general plan of operations as notified
Sketches to Corps Commanders, the First Army will assume the offensive on
17, 19. the 25th September, and advance between Lens and the La Bassée Canal towards the line Henin-Liétard—Carvin.

(b) The French Tenth Army will also take the offensive on the 25th September and advance towards Douai. The left of its attack will pass immediately south of Lens.

(c) The dividing line between the First Army and the French Tenth Army will be the road Lens—Henin-Liétard—Flers, inclusive to the First Army.

(d) The Second Army will break the enemy's front near Hooze and will hold troops in readiness to support the First Army as opportunity offers.

(e) The XI. Corps and the Cavalry Corps (less one division) will be in General Reserve.

The Cavalry Corps will move through the First Army front and secure the crossings over the Haute Deule Canal between Douai and Courrières [6 miles ENE. of Lens] (both exclusive) as soon as the enemy's line has been broken.

2. Corps of the First Army south of the La Bassée Canal will attack with the object of securing the line Loos—Hulluch, and the ground extending to the La Bassée Canal. As soon as possible after piercing this line units will be pushed forward to gain possession of the crossings of the Haute Deule Canal between Harnes and Bauvin.

Corps of the First Army north of the La Bassée Canal will vigorously engage the enemy in order to prevent him from withdrawing troops for a counter-attack.

Wherever the enemy gives ground he must be followed up with the greatest energy.

3. (a) The artillery bombardment will commence on the 21st September, and will continue day and night under instructions already issued.

(b) The IV. Corps will assault the enemy's trenches between the Double Crassier (inclusive) and the Vermelles—Hulluch road (exclusive).

It will advance with its left on the Hulluch—Vendin-le-Vieil road, and operate so as to secure the passage of the Haute Deule Canal at Pont-a-Vendin and the Lens—Carvin road south of Annay.

(c) The I. Corps will assault the enemy's trenches between the Vermelles—Hulluch road (inclusive) and the La Bassée Canal.

It will advance with its right on the Hulluch—Vendin-le-Vieil road, and operate so as to secure the passages of the Haute Deule Canal from Pont-a-Vendin to Bauvin.

It will also assault the enemy's trenches at Givenchy and attack Canteleux.

(d) The Indian Corps will assault the enemy's trenches in the vicinity of the Moulin du Pietre. It will take advantage of any weakening of the enemy on its front to operate so as to secure the high ground about Haut Pommereau and La Cliqueterie Fme.

(e) The III. Corps will assault the enemy's trenches in the vicinity of Le Bridoux. It will take advantage of any weakening of the enemy on its front to operate with a view to effecting a junction with the Indian Corps on the Aubers ridge.

4. The attacks by the IV. and I. Corps south of the La Bassée Canal will be preceded by 40 minutes gas and smoke, in accordance with the directions already issued, and the assault will take place at 0.40.

The attacks by the I. Corps at Givenchy and by the Indian Corps will be preceded by 10 minutes gas and smoke, and the assaults will take place at 0.10.

The attack by the III. Corps will take place at daylight. It will not be preceded by smoke unless the hour of zero is suitable.¹

The hour of zero will be notified later.

G.O.C.'s Corps will arrange for smoke to be discharged along the whole of the remainder of their line, commencing at 0.6, and will be prepared to take advantage of any retirement of the enemy in their front and to advance with their whole force in conformity with the general plan of operations.

5. The 3rd Cavalry Division (less one brigade) will be in Army Reserve in the Bois des Dames [4 miles WSW. of Béthune], in readiness to advance on Carvin as soon as possible.

6. Adv. First Army Headquarters will remain at Hinges.

R. BUTLER, Major-General,
General Staff, First Army.

Issued at 11 P.M.

APPENDIX 17.

OPERATION ORDER No. 35

BY

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR H. S. RAWLINSON, BT.,
K.C.B., C.V.O.,

Commanding IV. Corps.

[NOTE :—The objectives, &c. in paragraphs 6, 7, 8 and 10 are indicated in detail by references to the 1/10,000 Trench Map in use at the time. These objectives and boundaries are clearly shown on Map 7.]

Headquarters, IV Corps,
20th September, 1915.

Map 7. 1. (a) Under orders received from First Army, the IV Corps will **Sketch** attack the enemy's position between the Double Crassier (inclusive) **19.** and the Vermelles—Hulluch road (exclusive).

(b) Simultaneously with this, strong attacks will be made south of the IV Corps front by the French, and to the north by the I Corps, while the III and Indian Corps will make minor attacks. The Second Army will also make an attack on Hooge.

(c) The objectives of the IV Corps are Loos, Hill 70, Cité St. Auguste, southern part of Hulluch, and the enemy's defences between the two latter villages, with the ultimate object of securing the passage of the Haute Deule Canal at Pont à Vendin, and the Lens—Carvin

¹ This seems to be the first official use of zero hour for starting time.

road south of Annay, advancing with its left on the Hulluch—Vendin le Vieil road.

(d) The objectives of the I Corps will be Fosse 8, St. Elie, Puits 13, and the northern part of Hulluch, with the ultimate object of securing the passages of the Haute Deule Canal from Pont à Vendin to Bauvin, advancing with its right on the Hulluch—Vendin le Vieil road.

2. The offensive of the I and IV Corps will commence with a steady bombardment by all available guns night and day during the first four days and up to the time of the infantry assault on the fifth day.

In order to conceal, as far as possible, the points of attack, the bombardment will be distributed over the whole front of the First Army, whilst counter-battery guns deal with any of the enemy's batteries that may disclose their positions.

3. At 0 on the morning of the fifth day, gas and smoke will be discharged for 40 minutes along the whole of the IV Corps front, and this discharge will be immediately followed by the infantry assault at 0.40.

4. Instructions regarding the use of gas and smoke have been issued separately.

5. During and after the 40 minutes discharge of gas and smoke the artillery will add to the effect of the gas by firing on the hostile front line system of trenches with shrapnel only, and on their objectives beyond, with H.E. and shrapnel, in accordance with the artillery time-table already arranged.

6. With a view to forming a defensive flank southwards to cover the advance of the 1st and 15th Divisions, the objectives of the 47th Division will be :—

- (a) The Double Crassier as far as M.4.d.8.8.
- (b) Hostile front line system of trenches from M.4.a.1.3. to G.34.a.6.5.
- (c) The second line trenches from M.4.d.8.8. to the cemetery in G.35.a. (inclusive).
- (d) New School G.35.d.7.8
Buildings G.35.b.2.2. and G.35.d.1.8.
- (e) Enclosure in G.35.d.
- (f) Copse in M.6.a.
- (g) Fosse in G.36.

Demonstrations will also be made by 47th Division between the Double Crassier and Puits 16.

7. The objectives of the 15th Division will be :—

- (a) The hostile front line system of trenches from G.34.a.6.5. to the hostile sap G.22.d.6.3.—3.8.
- (b) The second line trenches between the cemetery in G.35.a. (exclusive) and G.29.b.3.9.
- (c) Loos village (less buildings G.35.b.2.2. and d.1.8. and New School G.35.d.7.8.).
- (d) Hill 70.
- (e) Cité St. Auguste.
- (f) The high ground N. of Loison.

8. The objectives of the 1st Division will be :—

- (a) The hostile front line system of trenches from sap G.23.a.4.3. —G.22.b.9.7. to Vermelles—Hulluch road (exclusive).
- (b) The second line trenches from G.29.b.3.9. to G.12.d.6.0.
- (c) Line of the Lens—Cité St. Elie Road from Puits 14 bis (inclusive) to house H.13.a.2.8. (inclusive).
- (d) Bois Hugo.
- (e) Hulluch between H.13.d.2.5. and trench H.13.b.1.7.—b.6.6. (inclusive).
- (f) Puits 13 bis—Redoubt H.20.d.
- (g) The passages of the Canal at Pont à Vendin.

9. Divisions, on reaching the enemy's front line system of trenches, will send out bombing parties to join up with neighbouring formations and secure their flanks.

10. The 7th Division will be on the left of the 1st Division, and their objectives will be :—

Puits 13 and northern part of Hulluch.

The right of this division will be directed on :—

G.12.c.2.1.—G.12.c.6.0.—G.12.d.6.0—

H.13.b.2.8.—H.13.b.7.8, and along the Hulluch—Vendin le Vieil Road.

11. The assaulting troops will advance as fast as possible from one objective to another. Divisions will push up fresh troops from the rear to hold the successive lines captured by the assaulting troops.

12. (a) The following guns of the 1st Group H.A.R. will carry out the bombardment and support the attack of the 1st, 15th and 47th Divisions :—

- 1 15" howitzer.
- 4 9·2" howitzers.
- 8 8" howitzers.
- 4 6" Mark VII guns.
- 7 batteries 60 prs. (28 guns).
- 3 batteries 4·7" (12 guns).
- 2 9·2" guns on railway trucks.
- 4 batteries 18 prs. (24th Division).

(b) The artillery of the 1st, 15th and 47th Divisions, four batteries of 6" howitzers, 2 batteries (4·5") 109th Brigade, and two batteries (18 pr.) 107th Brigade, divided into three divisional groups, will be under the command of Brigadier-General C. E. D. Budworth, M.V.O., and will support the 1st, 15th and 47th Divisions in their respective attacks, under instructions already issued.

(c) A map showing the "lifts" of the artillery of the 1st Group H.A.R., and IV Corps Artillery, during the various phases of the infantry assault has been issued to all concerned.

(d) A proportion of the Divisional Artillery will be detailed beforehand by the Corps Artillery Commander to follow up the infantry advance and furnish closer support as the attack moves forward.

(e) As soon as possible after the hostile advanced trenches have been captured, the Divisional Artillery of the 1st, 15th, and 47th Divisions will be placed under direct control of the Divisional

Commanders, and Brigadier-General Budworth will resume command of the 1st Divisional Artillery. Two batteries of 6" howitzers will be allotted to the 1st Division, and two to the 15th Division, at the same time. Two batteries 107th Brigade, R.F.A. (24th Division), and two batteries 109th (Howr.) Brigade (24th Division), will then receive orders from Corps Headquarters.

13. The bombardment will commence on the 21st September.

The hour of zero in reference to the gas attack on the 25th will be notified later.

14. The attack of the IV Corps will be pressed home to the utmost extent of its power, and all commanders must exert their maximum of effort in driving the enemy from his positions.

15. The 3rd Cavalry Division and XI Corps will be held in Army Reserve in rear of the I and IV Corps and will be brought forward in support as occasion demands.

16. The IV Corps Advanced Headquarters will open at Vaudricourt from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M. on the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, and at 10 A.M. till further orders on the 24th September.

A. A. MONTGOMERY, Brigadier-General,
General Staff, IV. Corps.

APPENDIX 18.

Memorandum

1st Division.

15th Division.

47th Division.

4th Corps Artillery.

Certain situations may arise which require previous consideration and discussion. The Corps Commander's views as to how he proposes to deal with the various likely eventualities are given below.

1. If the weather conditions permit it is intended that the hour of zero is to be 4.50 A.M. The hour will be definitely notified to Divisions between 9 P.M. and 10 P.M. on the 24th September.

2. If the weather conditions do not admit of gas being used on the morning of the 25th, and circumstances do not admit of offensive operations being postponed, the great moral effect of a surprise gas attack will be eliminated, and it is not intended to attempt to carry the whole of the enemy's defences in one rush.

The advance will be made in stages until the final objectives are reached, but each stage will have to be systematically prepared.

3. Under these conditions, the 15th Division will attack the Loos salients at 5 A.M. on the 25th without the use of gas, but with the employment of such smoke shells, etc., as can be employed to assist the assault.

We shall probably receive warning as regards unfavourable weather conditions about 1 P.M. on 24th.

4. The 1st and 47th Divisions will not attack at the same time as the 15th Division (see para. 6 below), but as soon as the 15th Division attack is launched will demonstrate all along their fronts.

5. The Corps Artillery and No. 1 Group H.A.R. will open intense fire as soon as the 15th Division attack is launched.

Map 7. (a) On the 47th Division Front.

(i) On the front line system of trenches from the Double Crassier northward.

(ii) On all objectives whose destruction will afford the greatest assistance to the 15th Division.

(b) On the 15th Division Front.

(i) On the second line system of trenches.

(ii) On all objectives in rear whose destruction will afford the greatest assistance to the 15th Division, especially Loos Village.

(c) On the 1st Division Front.

(i) On the front line system of trenches from sap G.22.d.6.3 —3.8 [Southern Sap] (exclusive) to Lone Tree.

(ii) On all objectives whose destruction will afford the greatest assistance to the 15th Division.

This intense fire to be continued until the 15th Division is firmly established in the enemy's first line system of trenches.

6. The attack on the Loos salients by the 15th Division on the 25th will be followed later by attacks by the 1st and 47th Divisions, the nature and time of which will depend on the conditions that then obtain.

7. The 1st and 47th Divisions will, therefore, be prepared to act as follows :—

(i) If the wind remains unfavourable, and if the progress effected by the French makes such a course desirable, the 1st Division will attack with the object of capturing :—

(a) The hostile first line system of trenches from sap G.23.a.4.3. —G.22.b.9.7. [Northern Sap] (inclusive) to Vermelles—Hulluch road (exclusive).

(b) The hostile 2nd line system of trenches.

(c) The southern part of Hulluch.

The 7th Division will at the same time attack the northern part of Hulluch.

The 47th Division to make a demonstration at the same time.

The attack of the 1st Division will be made later in the day on the 25th September, and will be preceded by one hour's intense bombardment by all available guns of the 1st Group, H.A.R., and Corps Artillery, leaving only sufficient guns to cover the front of the 15th Division and to assist in the demonstration by the 47th Division.

or

(ii) If the wind remains unfavourable, but the progress of the French does not render an early attack desirable, the 1st and 47th Divisions will attack after dark, night 25th/26th, at an hour to be notified later.

The objectives of the 1st Division will be the hostile front line system of trenches from sap G.23.a.4.3—G.22.b.9.7 [Northern Sap] (inclusive) to Vermelles—Hulluch road, the enemy's second line trenches, and the southern part of Hulluch village.

The objectives of the 47th Division will be the Double Crassier as far east as M.4.d.8.8 [second line], the front line system of trenches and the second line trenches.

At the same time, the 15th Division will attack the second line trenches.

or

(iii) If the wind becomes favourable during the 25th, the 1st, 15th and 47th Divisions will attack under cover of gas on morning of 26th September. The objectives of the three Divisions being those laid down in Operation Order No. 35, paragraphs 6, 7, and 8.

A. A. MONTGOMERY, Br.-General,
General Staff, IV Corps.

H.Q. IV Corps.
21st September, 1915.

APPENDIX 19.

OPERATION ORDER No. 19

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL C. ST. L. BARTER, C.V.O., C.B.,
Commanding 47th (London) Division.

[NOTE :—Objectives, &c. of brigades are here given by references to the 1/10,000 Trench Map in use at the time. Attack frontages are shown on Map 9 ; the divisional objectives on Map 7.]

20th September 1915.

1. The First Army has been ordered to assume the offensive in connection with the French to the south. Maps 7,
9.

The Second Army attacks Hooge. Sketch
20.

The 81st (French) Division immediately on our right is to demonstrate only.

The IV. & I. Corps are to attack the enemy's positions south of the La Bassée Canal, with Loos, Hill 70, Cité St. Auguste, Benefontaine, Hulluch and St. Elie, as ultimate objectives.

The 3rd Cavalry Division and XI. Corps are in Army Reserve.

The 47th Division forms the right of the attack of the First Army and is to cover the flank by forming a defensive flank southwards.

The 15th Division on our left has Loos, Hill 70, and Cité St. Auguste as objectives, and the 1st Division on the left of the 15th Division, directs its right attack on Puits 14 bis.

2. The G.O.C. intends to attack with the 140th and 141st Infantry Brigades. The 142nd Infantry Brigade (less 2 battalions) will be in Divisional Reserve. Two battalions of the 142nd Infantry Brigade will maintain the right of our present defence line.

3. The attack will be preceded by 4 days continuous bombardment by Heavy and Field Artillery, commencing on 21st September, with a view to :—

- (i) Removing obstacles and cutting wire.
- (ii) Destroying artillery observation stations.
- (iii) Bombarding defences and connections.
- (iv) Damaging buildings in order to make them more susceptible to gas attack.
- (v) Lowering the enemy's moral.

The artillery programme is issued separately.

4. The assault will be preceded by 40 minutes gas attack opposite the points to be assaulted combined with the formation of a smoke screen along the whole of the First Army front.

The commencement of the gas attack on 25th September will be timed "zero" and movements will be regulated from this.

The exact time of "zero" will be communicated later.

Staff Officers will be sent to Advanced Divisional Headquarters at 7 P.M. on 24th September to set watches.

5. Separate instructions have been issued as regards :

Artillery objectives, co-operation, and affiliation.

Royal Engineer co-operation.

Gas and smoke attacks.

Concentration for assault.

System of messages in case of postponement of gas attack.

General instructions. Tactical—Administrative.

Detailed instructions—Road Controls, Prisoners of War and Veterinary arrangements.

6. (a) The right of our present defensive line, Sub-section W.1. and that part of W.2. south of the Quarries (exclusive) will be maintained by :—

2 battalions of the 142nd
Infantry Brigade.

142nd Infantry Brigade
Machine Gun Battery.

142nd Infantry Brigade
95 m/m Battery (4 guns).

2 sections 1/3rd London
Field Coy. R.E.

No. 7 Trench Howitzer Battery
(2") (less 2 guns)

"G" and "I" Trench Mortar
Batteries.

Commander :—

Lt.-Col. E. J. Previté
22nd Bn. London Regt.

This portion of the line will demonstrate only.

(b) The 140th Infantry Brigade will form the right attack and will also be responsible for the present defensive line—Sub-section W.2 (less that portion south of the Quarry).

Commander—Br.-General G. J. Cuthbert, C.B.

Troops— 140th Infantry Brigade
 140th Infantry Brigade Machine Gun Battery
 140th Infantry Brigade 95 m/m Battery (4 guns)
 2 Sections 1/3rd London Field Coy. R.E.
 1 gun of No. 7 Trench Howitzer Battery
 No. 8 Trench Howitzer Battery (1½") (less 2 guns)
 1 platoon and 2 Machine guns 4th Bn. R. Welch Fus.

Front of Assault—M.3.b.7.2 to Sap. 1 (exclusive).

Objectives—The hostile system of defences :—

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-------|
| (i) The Double Crassier— | Artillery fire is lifted south and east of this before | 0·40' |
| G.34.c.9.2 (inclusive). | | |
| (ii) M.4.d.8.8—G.35.c.6.2. | do. | 0·50' |
| (inclusive) | | |

(c) The 141st Infantry Brigade will form the left attack and will also be responsible for our present defensive line, Sub-Section W.3. and Sap 18 (inclusive).

Commander—Br.-General W. Thwaites.

Troops— 141st Infantry Brigade.
 141st Infantry Brigade Machine Gun Battery
 141st Infantry Brigade 95 m/m Battery (4 guns)
 2 sections 4th London Field Coy. R.E.
 2 Guns of No. 8 Trench Howitzer Battery (1½").
 1 platoon and 2 machine guns 4th Bn. R. Welch Fus.

Front of Assault—Sap 1 to Sap 18 (both inclusive).

Objectives—The hostile system of defences :—

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------|
| (i) G.34.c.9.2 (exclusive)— | Artillery fire will be lifted south and east of this before | 0·40' |
| G.34.a.6.5 (inclusive). | | |
| (ii) G.35.c.8.2 (exclusive)— | do. | 0·50' |
| G.35.a.6.3 (inclusive). | | |
| (iii) Enclosure in G.35.d. | | |
| Houses at G.35.d.2.9 and G.35.b.2.2. | | |
| School House | do. | 1·15' |
| (iv) Copse and Chalk Pit | do. | 1·30' |
| (v) Loos Crassier | do. | 1·15'* |

* As 15th Division are timed to be at Puits No. 15 by 1·15'.

(d) Line of demarcation between 140th and 141st Infantry Brigades for all purposes is a line from G.35.c.6.2 through Maison des Mitralleurs produced westwards to Brebis Keep south east.

(e) The Divisional Reserve will be formed of :—

Divisional Mounted Troops (less special duties)	Square L.21. [1 m.W. of Mazingarbe].
6th London Fd. Arty. Bde. (less 1½ battys)	Haillicourt
7th London Fd. Arty Bde. (less 2 Battys)	Haillicourt
1/3rd Lon. Fd. Coy. R.E. (less 4 sections)	Les Brebis.
2/3rd Lon. Fd. Coy. R.E.	Les Brebis.
4th Lon. Fd. Coy. R.E. (less 2 sections)	Les Brebis.
4th Battn. R. Welch Fus. (less 2 platoons and machine guns)	North Maroc.

- (b) Green's Force will construct a strong point at H.19.a.66. [where road from Bois Carré joins Lens—La Bassée Road].
- (c) 1st Infantry Brigade will put the Southern end of Hulluch village in a state of defence, and construct a strong point at H.13.a.2.8 to H.13.a.2.6. [Buildings W. of Lens—La Bassée road and 300 yds. S. of Tournebride Estaminet cross roads].
- (iv) The points in the line of the subsequent objectives to be consolidated are :—
- (a) Fme des Mines de Lens and North East corner of wood in H.27 c. [Bois de Dix-Huit].
- (b) German second line trench from point H.27.a.2.6 to point H.26.b.9.8. [*Stützpunkt V.*].
- (c) The Redoubt in H.20.d.3.7. [*Stützpunkt IV.*].
- (d) Point 93. [Immediately N. of (c)].
- (e) Puits No. 13 bis.
- (v) It must depend upon the progress of the attack both on our own Front and on the Fronts of the 15th Division and of the 1st Corps as to whether it will be necessary to link up our own front line with that of the enemy. If the situation renders such a course necessary the following connections will be made :—
- By 2nd Infantry Brigade—To saps G.22.b.9.7 [Northern Sap] and G.17.c.8.1. [Sap by Lone Tree].
- By 1st Infantry Brigade—To saps G.17.a.9.4 [Sap at Bois Carré] and G.17.b.2.8. [Sap at la Haie].
- This work is, however, to be considered as of secondary importance to that indicated in Sub-para. (ii) above.
- (vi) No consolidation work is to be carried out by troops of the assaulting columns. These must push straight on, and the work of consolidating entrusted to working parties pushed up from behind.

2. Working parties.

The following working parties will be organized by General Officers Commanding Brigades :—

(i) First working parties.

- By 2nd Infantry Brigade—2 Sections 26th Field Co. R.E.
 1 Company Infantry (not less than 200 strong).
 Portion of Brigade wiring party.
- By 1st Infantry Brigade —2 Sections 23rd Field Co. R.E.
 1 Company Infantry (not less than 200 strong).
 Portion of Brigade wiring party.

These parties will be stationed in the trenches of their Brigade areas in such a position as to follow up the assault behind the supporting battalions. They will draw their tools and stores from the dumps on the line of the new fire trenches as they advance.

(ii) Second working parties.

By 2nd Infantry Brigade—26th Field Co. R.E. (less 2 Sections).

The infantry mining detachment attached to the 23rd Field Co.

Portion of Brigade wiring party.

By 1st Infantry Brigade—23rd Field Co. R.E. (less 2 Sections).

The infantry mining detachment attached to the 23rd Field Co.

Portion of Brigade wiring party.

These working parties will be in reserve at the disposal of the Brigadiers. The personnel of the Field Companies will be engaged on special duty in the front trench up to the moment of the assault. As soon as the assault is launched, this personnel will be collected at a place to be selected beforehand by the Brigadiers.

The mining detachments, which will be in Philosophie, will move up via French Alley as soon as the assault is launched under orders of the officers commanding Field Companies, to places selected by Brigadiers beforehand. They will draw their tools and materials as they advance from the dumps on the line of the new fire trench.

(iii) Green's Force working party.

1 Section Lowland Field Company R.E.

$\frac{1}{2}$ Company Infantry (not less than 100 strong).

Portion of wiring parties from 1st and 2nd Inf. Brigades.

This party will be stationed in the trenches in Green's Force area and will accompany the advance of Green's Force. They will draw their tools from a dump which has been placed on the line of the Fosseyway.

(iv) Bridging Parties.

1 Section Lowland Field Company R.E.

$\frac{1}{2}$ Company Infantry (not less than 100 strong) to be detailed by G.O.C. 3rd Infantry Brigade.

This party will be stationed at a point to be selected by General Officer Commanding 3rd Infantry Brigade, and will follow up behind the supporting battalions of the 2nd Infantry Brigade. Their task will be to repair the bridges and road between Corons de Rutoire and the Lone Tree, and to make ways for guns and vehicles at all points where the enemy's trenches and wire cross the road from Lone Tree to the Loos—La Bassée Road, thence to cross roads at G.18.c.1.6, [200 yds. further east] and thence to point G.24.b.1.8. [Road junction 700 yds. S.E. of above cross roads]. The ways are to be made by filling trenches with sandbags and earth, etc., and by bridging with specially prepared timber sent up from the rear in wagons. Material for repairing the bridges in our area will be stored at Le Rutoire Farm.

(v) A special party of 30 men, under an officer, will be detailed by the General Officer Commanding 2nd Infantry Brigade.

Their task is to proceed via Lone Tree, and having selected a suitable point in the German trenches between this and the Northern Sap, to make a route suitable for mounted troops across the German trenches by filling them with earth and sandbags, and by clearing away wire. The route to be marked by one or more red flags to be carried by the party.

3. Special bombing parties.

The following special bombing parties, in addition to any others that may be found necessary, will be organized by Brigades, the organization to include the replenishments of bombs :—

By 2nd Infantry Brigade.

- (a) To bomb down the enemy's front and support lines, to meet a similar party from the 15th Division bombing upwards.
- (b) To bomb up the enemy's front and support lines, to meet a similar party from the 1st Infantry Brigade bombing downwards.
- (c) To bomb down the North Loos Avenue trench to point 39 [Loos—La Bassée road], where a barricade will be constructed and held.

By 1st Infantry Brigade.

- (d) To bomb down the enemy's front and support lines, to meet a similar party from the 2nd Infantry Brigade bombing upwards.
 - (e) To bomb down the trenches 16—81 and 52—31. [German trenches immediately E. of Loos—La Bassée road.]
- O.C. Green's Force will arrange to obtain his own information as to when the bombing parties at (b) and (d) above have met.

4. Gas.

There is no danger in following up the gas in the open, but as trenches, dug-outs, and cellars, in the German lines will probably be found full of gas, these must not be entered without lowering smoke helmets.

All available Vermorel Sprayers are to be pushed up immediately behind the assaulting troops with a supply of solution to refill them. Special parties are to be organized for the purpose in 1st and 2nd Infantry Brigades, and in Green's Force, and a proportion told off to accompany the special bombing parties.

The last two minutes of the gas and smoke discharge will be a smoke discharge only. During the last minute of this, the Infantry will get out of their trenches and move forward under cover of the smoke which is harmless, ready to launch their assault.

Previous to the attack, troops should be warned that no food or water found in the German trenches after the gas attack should on any account be used, as the gas may, in all probability, have a poisonous effect on both.

5. Movements.

As soon as the German front system of trenches, which lies near the crest of the ridge, has been taken, all movement of supporting and reserve troops, within our own trench area, will take place across the open, wire being freely cut along our back lines two nights before the assault.

Similarly, the attacking troops will advance direct on their objectives moving rapidly in extended order across the open. In the case of the special bombing parties referred to in paragraph 3, it is left to the discretion of the officers in charge whether to bomb from inside or outside the trenches attacked.

Battalion commanders are to impress upon all their officers, and the officers to their men, the necessity of rapid forward movement, irrespective of whether troops on their flanks are being temporarily held up. If full advantage is to be taken of the gas the attack must be in the nature of a rush through, and as much ground made as possible before the enemy can recover his moral, or man his second line trenches East of the line Puits 14 bis—Hulluch. At the same time no mention is to be made of the fact that gas is to be used until battalions are actually in the trenches.

6. Special bombardments.

When any special bombardment is asked for, it is to be understood that normally it will continue from the first to the last gun for half an hour, of which the last five minutes will be intensive. The officer asking for it should invariably specify the time at which he wishes it to cease. It will cease at this hour precisely, irrespective of whether the time of receipt of the message by the battery has enabled it to last the full half hour or not.

An Artillery officer will be attached to each Infantry Brigadier, and to O.C. Green's Force, who will be in direct communication with the commander of the Artillery sub-group affiliated to these formations.

In addition, Artillery officers will be sent forward with (though not attached to) such battalions as may at the moment be found convenient, to keep their sub-group commanders in touch with the situation.

7. Wire cutting.

Numerous gaps in the wire along our whole front line will be cut during the night before the assault. As this is all French wire, the portions removed should be placed so as to conceal as far as possible the fact of its having been cut.

8. Information.

Attention is invited to the importance of getting back information to Brigade and Divisional Commanders.

Brigadiers will arrange to send back a report every half-hour, even if the information in it is of a negative character. Additional reports will of course be sent in in the event of anything of importance occurring between the half-hours.

Information by aeroplane.

As an additional means of procuring information use will be made of ground signals, which will be observed and transmitted by aeroplane to a wireless receiving station, situated near the Divisional Report Centre in Mazingarbe.

The following signals only will be used :—

(a) By the 1st Infantry Brigade.

- (i) The figure \wedge pointing towards the enemy to indicate that our troops have captured Hulluch.
- (ii) The figure \vee pointing away from the enemy to indicate that our troops have been driven out of and are no longer holding Hulluch.

(b) By the 2nd Infantry Brigade.

- (i) The Figure T to indicate that our troops have captured Puits No. 14 bis.
- (ii) The figure \perp to indicate that our troops have been driven out of and are no longer holding Puits No. 14 bis.

These signals will consist of strips of white sheeting 8' x 2' and will be carried and laid by the Headquarters of a particular battalion, to be detailed by the Brigadier, near his battalion headquarters.

9. Communications.

All communications from Advanced Divisional Headquarters to the Divisional Battle Station, and throughout the trench area are to be tested every hour during the night preceding the assault, and every half-hour from 5 A.M. up to the time of the assault.

A diagram showing all communications in the 1st Divisional area has been issued to Brigadiers and to O.C. Green's Force.

10. Maps.

All messages and reports will refer to either the 1/10,000 Sheet 36c. N.W., or to the 1/40,000 Sheet 36b and 36c, or to the 1/20,000 Sheet 36c. N.W.

11. Time.

The official time for the assault will be taken from the watches of the gas company representatives in the front line trenches. Brigadiers will be responsible that the watches of all commanders are synchronized with those of the gas company.

12. Veterinary.

Units are to be warned that contagious disease is known to be rife among the enemy's horses.

Captured animals, other than those required immediately to replace casualties, must not therefore be retained.

W. G. S. DOBBIE, Captain,
General Staff, 1st Division.

1st Division H.Q.
18th September 1915.

APPENDIX 21.

I. CORPS OPERATION ORDER No. 106

[NOTE :—The objectives and boundaries in paragraph 3 are indicated in detail by reference to the 1/10,000 Trench Map in use at the time. They are clearly shown on Map 7.]

20th September 1915.

Map 7. 1. The First Army will assume the offensive on 25th September and advance between Lens and the La Bassée canal towards the line Henin-Liétard—Carvin.

The I. and IV. Corps south of the La Bassée canal will attack with the object of securing the line Loos—Hulluch and the ground extending to the La Bassée canal. Immediately after piercing this line units will be pushed forward to gain possession of the crossings of the Haute Deule canal between Harnes and Bauvin.

North of the La Bassée canal the enemy will be engaged vigorously in order to prevent him withdrawing troops for a counter-attack. Wherever the enemy gives ground he must be followed up with the greatest energy.

The IV. Corps will advance with its left on the Hulluch—Vendin le Vieil road, and operate so as to secure the passage of the Haute Deule canal at Pont à Vendin and the Lens—Carvin road south of Annay.

The 3rd Cavalry Division (less one brigade) will be in Army Reserve in the Bois des Dames [4 miles WSW. of Béthune] in readiness to advance on Carvin as soon as possible.

2. The general intention of the G.O.C. I. Corps is to break the enemy's line south of the La Bassée canal and to advance to the line of the canal Pont à Vendin—Bauvin with his right on the Hulluch—Vendin le Vieil road.

A main attack will be made by the 7th, 9th and 2nd Divisions against the enemy's front from the Vermelles—Hulluch road (inclusive) to the La Bassée canal with the view to an immediate advance on Hulluch—St. Elie—Haisnes—railway line from Haisnes to La Bassée canal.

A subsidiary attack will also be made by 2nd Division from Givenchy.

Main 3. 7th Division, with two brigades in front line and one brigade attack. in reserve, will assault the enemy's front trenches from the Vermelles—Hulluch road (inclusive) to Quarry Trench (G.5.c.87) and will advance with its right on G.12.c.60—G.12.d.60—H.13.b.17.28.66 (exclusive), and its left on G.5.c.87—cross roads G.6.b.52 (inclusive).

9th Division, with two brigades in front line and one brigade in reserve, will assault from Hohenzollern Redoubt to Vermelles Railway Triangle [Les Briques] (inclusive), and will advance with its right on south end of Slag Heap—Slag Alley, south of Fosse No. 8.—cross roads G.6.b.52 (exclusive), and its left on A.27.b.98—Train Alley—Lone Farm—Cemetery Alley—Pekin Alley—A.80.a.74, all inclusive.

2nd Division, with two brigades in front line south of canal will assault the enemy's front trenches from left of 9th Division to the La Bassée canal, and will advance with its right in touch with the left of 9th Division, and its left along La Bassée canal to Canal Alley (railway line Haisnes to La Bassée canal).

The left brigade of the 2nd Division holding the line north of the canal will attack the enemy's trenches opposite Givenchy and will capture the line A.9.b.09—26—43—A.9.d.79—A.10.c.03, and will push on to the line Chapelle St. Roch—Canteleux. Subsidiary Attack.

It must be impressed upon all commanders that to obtain success it is essential to push on the advance with the utmost rapidity in order to take advantage of the first surprise and to prevent the enemy's reserves occupying his rearward defensive lines.

4. The following distinctive screens will be used by divisions to denote positions gained by their infantry :—

7th Division—Red and blue diagonal on one side—
khaki on reverse side.

9th Division—Red and yellow diagonal.

2nd Division—Yellow—reverse side khaki.

Smoke candles giving yellow smoke, and men raising their caps on bayonets, will also be used as signals to denote positions gained by infantry.

5. Orders for wire-cutting, preliminary bombardment and "bar-rages" will be issued by B.G.R.A. I. Corps. The first day of bombardment will be the 21st September.

6. The hour of Zero will be notified later. The left brigade of 2nd Division will attack from Givenchy at 0.10 hours, and the 2nd Division south of La Bassée canal, 7th and 9th Divisions will attack simultaneously at 0.40 hours. Action during period from Zero to 0.10 and 0.40 hours will be in accordance with instructions already issued.

7. At 1.20 the divisional artillery (1.10 for the artillery covering the left of 7th Division) will come under the divisional control, subject to the following :—

The heavy artillery will remain at the disposal of the Corps Commander and will be allotted to divisions as circumstances demand.

Should the infantry attack be checked at any period prior to 1.20, a special bombardment may be demanded of, and ordered by, the Corps. The hour at which this special bombardment will commence will be notified. It will last for thirty minutes from first to last gun, the last five minutes of this period being marked by a rapid rate of fire.

Expiration of this period of intensive bombardment will be the signal for the infantry to assault.

8. The reserve brigades of 7th and 9th Divisions will be assembled as far forward as possible in trenches of the Grenay line with a view to pushing forward the advance rapidly and avoiding delay.

9. No. 7 Mountain Battery (less one section) is placed at disposal of 9th Division to support its advance.

No. 1 Motor Machine Gun Battery is placed at the disposal of 2nd Division.

The 31st Army Troops Coy., R.E., and 1/1st Hants Fortress Coy. R.E. (T) will assemble at Saily Labourse under the orders of C.E. I. Corps.

The 170th, 173rd and 176th Tunnelling Companies R.E. will retain such men in the different mining fronts as are considered necessary by 2nd Division, and the remainder will be assembled under orders of the 2nd Division. In the event of a general advance they will come under the orders of the C.E. I. Corps.

10. Advanced Corps Headquarters will be established at Prieure St. Pry at 6 P.M. on 24th September.

Issued at 3.30 P.M.

A. S. COBBE, Br.-General,
General Staff, I. Corps.

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